Seminar focuses on disabled access issues

As part of its Chamber EDucation program, the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce is hosting a “Disabled Access” Seminar May 3, 1-4pm at the Tahoe City Public Utility District’s Board Room, 221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City.

The seminar is geared for commercial business owners and tenants and will cover the history of disabled access regulations and the Americans with Disability Act as it pertains to buildings, the difference between California Title 24 Disabled Access Code Provisions and the ADA, Placer County building permit deadlines and time lines, and SB1608 and California access.

Attendees will also take away steps to evaluate their business compliance with all ADA requirements, how to reduce the risk of litigation, and strategies for dealing with lawsuits if an individual gets sued for ADA access violations.

Speakers include Chief Building Official Tim Wegner of Placer County, Certified Access Specialist Mike Gardner of CASp Inspections and Tony DeCristoforo of Stoel Rives Law Offices.

This seminar is free to North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce members and is $20/person for non-members.

For details, contact North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce Manager Kym Fabel at (530) 581.8764 or kym@PureTahoeNorth.com.

South Shore fighting Caltrans' Echo Summit closure date

By Kathryn Reed

South Shore officials are fighting Caltrans' decision to close Echo Summit four days before the largest professional cycling event in North America starts in Stateline.

State Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, has stepped into the fray – again. He has arranged for a conference call for Monday with local officials and Caltrans District 3 Director Jody Jones.

"Shock is the word being used. This totally caught people by surprise. There wasn't even a phone call. Just a press release went out and that's that," said Steve Teshara, chairman of the South Shore Transportation Management Association.

This agency that has been in existence since 1994 is taking the lead on changing the start date for the closure. Teshara said anytime after May 15 would be acceptable.

The California Department of Transportation announced April 29 that starting May 11 Highway 50 over Echo Summit would be closed for two weeks to replace the dilapidated rock wall. This route is the main artery between the South Shore and points west.

With about 35,000 spectators expected at the start for the Amgen Tour de California, many would presumably be coming over Echo Summit.

Although there are alternative routes to get to South Lake Tahoe, what has South Shore tourism officials worried is people will skip their end of the lake and instead opt to be

on the North Shore. Northstar is where the first leg ends and Squaw Valley is where Day 2 starts.

While the Echo Summit project has been talked about for years and for more than a month people knew it could start any time after May 1, Caltrans gave no reason why May 11 was picked.

Caltrans officials were not available for comment Friday.

The criteria had been the need for a window of 10 straight days of clear weather. The contractor also faces penalties if the full closure extends into June. Plus, the road will be open during Memorial Day weekend.

May is traditionally an iffy weather month in Lake Tahoe, with 2010 full of snowy days.

Tourism officials have already had to deflect misinformation that has been published. The May-June issue of *Via* magazine wrongly stated Echo Summit would be closed through June. The reality is after the two week closure, it will be subject to controlled traffic for up to six weeks. Construction will end at noon on Fridays and the road completely open Memorial Day – and if work is still going on, Fourth of July.

“With respect to this project, the community has been continuously misled. They said they understood how important Amgen is and it doesn’t seem important at all,” Teshara said of Caltrans.

Teshara once was an advocate for the Echo Summit project starting in May. He wrote a letter to Caltrans saying as much. But this was before the region knew it would be hosting multiple stages of the bike race.

At a March 9 meeting with Gaines, Caltrans, Sierra-at-Tahoe General Manager John Rice, Andrew Strain of Heavenly Mountain Resort, B Gorman with Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, reps from contractor C.C. Myers, South Tahoe

Councilman Tom Davis, and South Tahoe staff member Nancy Kerry, it was revealed Caltrans picked May based on Teshara's letter. They thought he was speaking for the basin, even though at the time he was speaking on behalf of the North Shore – which is a likely beneficiary of an Echo Summit closure.

Caltrans, according to people at the meeting, did not ask for other input. But Amgen announced in February how the Tahoe area would be part of this year's race, so Caltrans has had time to adjust any internal time line it may have had.

While May is a traditionally slow time throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin, it has been well documented events literally drive people to the basin. That was an impetus for striving to be part of Tour de California.

What worries South Shore officials is Caltrans' decision to close Echo Summit pre-Amgen will drive them elsewhere.

Lake Tahoe Boulevard's future in El Dorado County's hands

By Kathryn Reed

Doing nothing is not an option. That was the message delivered Friday night by El Dorado County officials when it comes to Lake Tahoe Boulevard.

More than 80 people sat or stood through a two-hour meeting about the proposed changes on this stretch of road on the South Shore between Clear View Drive and D Street.



Lake Tahoe Boulevard may not be four-lanes in coming years. Photo/LTN

Issues are whether the road will be reduced to two lanes from four, what types of bike trails and/our routes would be developed, and if the speed limit would be altered.

While some bemoaned not knowing about the April 29 meeting, others had been giving written input for weeks. *Lake Tahoe News* reported on the meeting April 10 and had posted an item on the Events page prior to that.

More information about the alternatives is online.

What was new is a sixth alternative was announced, which will be online next week. Comments will be taken until May 6.

The meeting was a bit of a free-for-all, with people shouting from the audience, engaging speakers in a bit of a debate, applauding, booing and everyone being passionate about their stance.

It was a much less contentious meeting than fall 2008 when county officials were caught off-guard by the overwhelming backlash to keep the status quo. At that time the emotions from the 2007 Angora Fire were still raw. Lake Tahoe Boulevard is one of the main routes to the burn area.

While some still spoke of the need to keep four lanes for

emergency vehicles, that did not dominate the conversation.

The project is billed to reduce sediment flowing into Angora Creek and the Upper Truckee River. Water quality is a major impetus for doing the project. This includes decreasing sediment runoff and storm zone restoration.

Safety is another overriding concern – for motorists and cyclists.

John Runnels said a long ago settlement requires the road to stay four lanes. While county officials disagreed with this after the meeting, they said legal counsel will resolve issues like the one Runnels raised.

Brendan Ferry, project manager for the county, also dispelled the falsehood that this environmental improvement project has anything to do with compensating for the Tahoe Keys debacle of paving over the most sensitive marsh in the basin in the 1960s.

Now it's up to county officials to decide which alternative is preferred. Scales are tipping toward Alternative 4 – which is in detail on Page 18 of the draft that is being discussed. It would maintain two lanes of striped 4-foot Class II bike lanes from Clear View Drive to Tahoe Mountain Road. From Tahoe Mountain Road to Sawmill Road it would go from four to two lanes with 4-foot Class II bike lanes. It would remove 6 feet of pavement on each side of the road. The forest trail from Lake Tahoe Boulevard at Sawmill Road to D Street would become a paved 8-foot Class I bike path.

The county expects to pick a preferred alternative this summer. Then begins the environmental document phase. During that time the public will have more opportunities to comment. That could be completed by fall 2012. Design would be in 2013. Construction would be that year or in 2014.

It's expected to cost between $880,000 and $1.5 million.

Although not all the money is in hand, what is secured is from grants. None is from the county’s general fund.

Fees to inspect boats in Tahoe announced

The watercraft inspection and decontamination program operated by the Tahoe Resource Conservation District has a price tag this year of nearly $2 million, but most of the cost is carried by grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Boat inspection fees pay for about one-third of the inspection services, according to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. All currently sealed Tahoe-only boats this year will pay $30 for a full year of AIS services.

All the rates may be found by clicking on fees. This rate is for the inspection. Marinas may have an additional fee.

New Donner Museum to be constructed

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

Preliminary work for construction of a new High Sierra Crossing Museum at Donner Memorial State Park will get under way this week.

The new visitor center has been in the works for several years, according to Scott Elliott, acting superintendent for the State Parks sector that includes Donner Memorial. The project is intended to better exhibit the history of Donner Pass and the entire region.

The preliminary work will include removing about 100 trees in the area of the parking lot. This work will result in a noticeable, though temporary, change to the character of the area but is necessary to expand the existing parking lot to accommodate increased visitor demand and provide appropriate bus and RV parking, according to a State Parks news release.

When the work is completed, forest trees are to be planted to surround the monument and screen the view of passing cars and neighboring commercial development.

Read the whole story

Study: Health gap between vegetarians and meat eaters

By David Newbury, Scotsman

Vegetarians are about a third less likely to suffer from heart disease, diabetes or a stroke than meat eaters, according to new medical research.

Those who shun meat and fish stand a better chance of not developing the high blood pressure and soaring levels of “bad” cholesterol that leads to heart and other problems, it said.

They have a 36 per cent lower rate of metabolic syndrome, the combination of symptoms that are a precursor to diabetes,

heart attacks and strokes.

Even people who only give up red meat improve their diets enough to give them a slightly lower risk of developing these conditions, said the United States study.

To be diagnosed with metabolic syndrome, a patient needs to suffer three out of five risk factors – high blood pressure, high HDL cholesterol, high glucose levels, high triglycerides (fat levels in the body) and having too big a waistband.

Vegetarians are not immune to this; 25 per cent of those studied by researchers from Loma Linda University, California had metabolic syndrome.

Read the whole story

More Calif. high schools blend college, career prep

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

For years, high schools have prepared some students for college and others for work. Now there's a push at the highest levels of state government to meld the two, so that as students learn job skills, they're also fulfilling course requirements needed to get into college.

You can see the concept at work at Cosumnes Oaks High School in Elk Grove, where a licensed contractor teaches college-prep engineering classes.

"I know I have a lot of students that aren't going to college, but my goal is still to prepare them because ultimately they

have to be critical thinkers, whether they're in the workforce or they go to school," said Tim McDougal, a college-educated teacher who owned a contracting business for 12 years.

His approach is part of a trend in California high schools: blending college preparation with career preparation. The goal is to offer more hands-on classes that will engage students turned off by the traditional academic approach, while infusing the college-bound curriculum with more real-world applications.

The number of career-oriented classes that meet admissions requirements at the University of California and California State University has skyrocketed in recent years, from fewer than 300 a decade ago to more than 8,300 today.

Sen. Darrell Steinberg has quietly helped fuel the growth through his role as the Senate's president pro tem.

Read the whole story

Armed man arrested in Douglas County

By Reno Gazette Journal

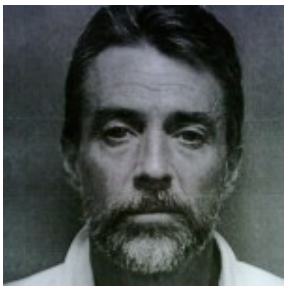
A man who was the subject of a dragnet in two counties on two days was arrested today without incident in Douglas County, a Washoe County Sheriff's Office spokesman said.

Deputy Armando Avina had few details about the arrest of Wade Richard Kelly, 52.

"He is in a Washoe County patrol car on his way from Douglas

County to Reno," Avina said.

Avina did not have information yet as to what charges Kelly might be facing in Reno. He is alleged to have fired several shots during a fight with his brother Friday morning at their mother's home in the 16600 block of Callahan Road off the Mount Rose Highway.



Wade Kelly

Read the whole story

Opinion: No one else should pay price for parole system's failure

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the April 29, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.***

We should all hope that Thursday's plea deal in Placerville, that will put Phillip Garrido and his wife, Nancy, behind bars for the rest of their lives finally will allow Jaycee Dugard and her family to begin healing from their decades-long ordeal.

In a crime that gained nationwide attention, the Garridos

kidnapped Dugard, then just 11 years old, from a South Lake Tahoe street and held her captive in a backyard shanty for nearly 20 years. Phillip Garrido, 60 now, fathered two children by the kidnapped girl.

His surprise guilty plea to 14 charges of kidnapping and sexual assault can send him to prison for a maximum 431 years. Nancy Garrido, who pleaded guilty to one count of kidnapping and one of rape, faces 36 years to life. Neither should ever be released back into society.

The guilty pleas are welcome because it means that Dugard and her children will not have to testify against her captors and can try to heal from the long trauma.

But the case should serve as a warning to law enforcement and, equally important, those who create budgets for police, corrections facilities, and parole and probation departments.

Read the whole story

What to drink with bbq?

May 24 at 6pm – Whites & Reds for Grillin’ tasting at Après Wine Company in South Lake Tahoe.

Cost – $20 advance, $25 at door. It includes five wines

and appetizer pairings.

RSVP to (530) 544.9463.