San Jose becomes largest U.S. city to ban plastic bags

By John Woolfolk, San Jose Mercury News

San Jose became the largest U.S. city to ban plastic carry-out bags Tuesday with an ordinance that supporters said was the most far-reaching in the country aimed at encouraging shoppers to bring reusable totes.

The ordinance, approved on a 10-1 vote after two years of study, wouldn't become effective until Jan. 1, 2012, to allow for more public outreach. It would prohibit retailers from giving out disposable plastic bags at the check stand and require them to charge for paper bags.

"This is a great step," Councilman Sam Liccardo said. "It's an opportunity to lead on an important environmental issue."

Read the whole story

Minor improvements to be made to Mikasa building

South Lake Tahoe officials have had conversations with contractors about façade changes and permit requirements for the building that housed Mikasa/Millers Outpost.

"So far the only thing that has been applied for, and (been) issued, is a building permit for roof repair which included the repair of fascia, roof sheathing, a shed roof over the electrical meter, and water damage at the rear of the

building. No application has been submitted for a ‘remodel.’ A design review approval along with building permits would be required for modifications to the exterior of the building,” city staff told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Caltrans to work on South Shore highways for years

By Kathryn Reed

Peering at a Caltrans work map, the highways on the South Shore look like they will be under construction for several years.

Eight of the 10 projects are for water quality; the other two are labeled intersection projects.



Construction on Luther Pass will be completed in 2011. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Mike Cook, who oversees the projects for this area, gave an

update to the incoming South Lake Tahoe City Council on Dec. 14 about what to expect on highways 50 and 89.

Project 1: Originally known as the Ski Run to Stateline project, this will begin in 2011 and continue into the next building season. However, the project now goes 1,200 feet west of Ski Run to Wildwood and doesn't go all the way to the state line. "This is a better use of money," Cook said. This is because much of the state line area already has had water quality treatments. Discussions are still ongoing to widen the street, with Caltrans having met with stakeholders on Dec. 2.

Project 2: Trout Creek to Ski Run will also begin in May. Construction is estimated to take three years. It will include class 2 bike trails and shoulders being widened to 6 feet, sidewalks and landscaping. No traffic delays will be in affect during the time Tour de California cycling events are going on in May, Cook pledged.

Project 3: Trout Creek to the Y will be overhauled in May 2013. Lanes will be wider, a class 2 bike trail put in and sidewalks. Cook said it would not be as extensively landscaped as other sections of Highway 50 because Caltrans is the exclusive payee on this portion.

Project 4: A left turn lane at Sierra Boulevard. This could be part of Project 3.

Project 5: The improvements at the Y, the intersection of highways 89 and 50, were finished last year.

Project 6: Y to Cascade Road will begin in 2014. Caltrans is working with the U.S. Forest Service as the federal agency looks to reconfigure bike trails in the Camp Richardson area. Caltrans plans to replace culverts, add sidewalks, and make the shoulder 4-feet wide in part of the area.

Project 7: Y to Airport Road will have 4-foot shoulders put in starting in 2013. Cook warns this may not be possible for the

entire stretch.

Project 8: Another 2013 project is to widen the shoulder from Meyers Road to Incline Road in El Dorado County.

Project 9: Highway 89 from Meyers to the Alpine County line will be finished next year. With Luther Pass being the detour route while Echo Summit is closed, the plan is to not have delays on this section at that time.

Project 10: Replacing seven rock walls on Echo Summit beginning spring 2011 as soon as weather permits could be the most disruptive of the projects. Highway 50 will be closed for two weeks. From Sacramento/Bay Area, the main alternate route being promoted is using highways 49, 88 and 89 to the South Shore. This will add about an hour to the drive – though it is scenic. After the closure, the highway will have controlled traffic for four weeks. Marketing gurus, who were in attendance at the meeting, are not calling it a closure despite the fact the road will be closed. Originally, the outreach to let people know about the closure was about $50,000. Caltrans has added another $150,000 – especially with people coming to town for the Amgen bike race.

Projects slated to begin beyond 2011 do not have secure funding, so the start dates may change.

Crusade to outlaw smoking in casinos

By Liz Benston, Las Vegas Sun

Paul McIntyre is smiling at the Global Gaming Expo, belying

the fact that he is embedded deep behind enemy lines.

From his 10-foot-square booth sandwiched between displays of gambling tables and slot machines, McIntyre – representing the nonprofit groups Kids Involuntarily Inhaling Secondhand Smoke and Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights – is pressuring casinos nationwide to ban smoking. He is sitting at a long table covered with stacks of fact sheets about smoking and colorful brochures showing smiling casino and restaurant workers. Bookending the table are two giant posters, including a photo of a young female casino dealer.

This is the final frontier for anti-smoking advocates – the casino industry's premier trade show, which wrapped up in Las Vegas last month – and not an entirely welcome place to be.

Few stop at the booth. Those who do usually have something to say.

"People expect to smoke and gamble when they come to Vegas," said Joe Marth, a young man whose Arkansas company makes casino surveillance cameras. A stone's throw away, he has been eyeing the booth all day and comes over for a closer look.

"It's not going to happen," he says when asked about the prospect of banning smoking in casinos.

Read the whole story

Caroling on the South Shore

Join Sierra Community Church for an evening of Christmas caroling Dec. 21st from 6:30-8:30pm, in the church parking lot located at 1165 Sierra Blvd. in South Lake Tahoe.

Get in the Christmas spirit with singing, hot chocolate, coffee and cookies, and then help spread the good cheer throughout the Sierra Tract neighborhood. Everyone is welcome.

For more information, call (530) 544.7055.

Southwest may be heading to the islands

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

Southwest Airlines could be heading as far southwest as the U.S. goes – to Hawaii.



The airline's chairman, president and CEO said in New York on Wednesday that Southwest would substitute 20 of its Boeing 737-700 aircraft orders to 800-series jets, opening the door to potential long over-water and international flights.

Addressing the Wings Club of New York City, Gary Kelly said the 175-passenger 800-series planes "set the stage to bring more destinations into the realm of possibilities for Southwest to operate a more economical aircraft and to offer better scheduling flexibility in high-demand, slot-controlled or gate-restricted markets."

Southwest expects to take delivery of the first of its larger jets in March 2012. The current plan is to deliver the planes in an Extended-range Twin-engine Operational Performance Standards configuration. ETOPS-configured jets are certified to fly over large bodies of water, putting the Hawaiian

Islands and the Caribbean in play as potential destinations for the discount carrier that is McCarran International Airport’s busiest airline.

The airline also has indicated that the larger jets could be used at airports where it has a limited number of gates or takeoff and landing slots, like LaGuardia International and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, to maximize the number of passengers it can fly to those destinations. Alaska, Mexico and Canada also have been named as potential destinations with the flexibility and range of the larger aircraft.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Conditions are iffy



The calendar still says fall, but it would be hard to know it based on all the winter weather in Tahoe. Unfortunately the storm is a windy one. That, combined with a mix of snow and rain on the slopes is calling for most resorts to not be completely open this morning.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Mancuso 8th in downhill; Vonn on the podium

By Elizabeth Karam, U.S. Ski Team

VAL d'ISERE, France – Olympic gold medalist Lindsey Vonn of Vail captured a stunning victory Saturday to regain the Audi FIS Alpine World Cup downhill standings lead as German Maria Riesch finished 24th. Teammate Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley was 8th with five Americans finishing inside the top 30.

"I'm really psyched to have the red bib back. It means a lot," said Vonn, who won the 2009 downhill World Championship on the nearby Solaise slope in Val d'Isere. "I hope that I can keep skiing well and hang onto the bib until the end of the year. Downhill is my favorite event."

Vonn and Mancuso, debuting personally designed Spyder speed suits, kicked out of the start under bluebird skies and with single digit temperatures as the field's covered faces dropped into their tucks for the Audi FIS Alpine World Cup downhill.

Vonn started 20th, making an incredible save after nearly crashing on the turn just below the second jump. She kept her cool, arriving in the finish arena with a time of 1:51.42 – 0.68 ahead of the field. Switzerland's Nadja Kamer finished in second with teammate Lara Gut in a close third.

Saturday's result marked Vonn's 35th World Cup win, the most of any American, as she regained the downhill standings lead.

After a few deep breaths in the gate, Mancuso charged the course crossing the line in eighth after Friday's super G was canceled when three feet of snow fell over the French resort. This was her fifth consecutive World Cup top 10.

"They did a good job pushing out all the snow, but it was

pretty soft still. I just a lost a little time in the middle but it was another solid downhill finish," said Mancuso. "Skiing's going well, I definitely want to go a little faster but it's a good solid finish."

Americans Leanne Smith (Conway, N.H.) in 18th, Laurenne Ross (Klamath Falls, Ore.) in 25th and Alice McKennis in 30th (Glenwood Springs, Colo.) all followed suit, breaking inside the top 30 to score World Cup downhill points.

The women will be back in the start gate Sunday in Val d'Isere for a super combined.

Official results, Audi FIS Alpine World Cup, Val d'Isere, France, Downhill

1. Lindsey Vonn, Vail, CO, 1:51.42

2. Nadja Kamer, Switzerland, 1:52.10

3. Lara Gut, Switzerland, 1:52.22

4. Elisabeth Goergl, Austria, 1:52.38

5. Ingrid Jacquemod, France, 1:52.61

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8. Julia Mancuso, Squaw Valley, CA, 1:52.99

18. Leanne Smith, Conway, NH, 1:53.44

25. Laurenne Ross, Klamath Falls, OR, 1:53.68

30. Alice McKennis, Glenwood Springs, CO, 1:53.96

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35. Chelsea Marshall, Pittsfield, VT, 1:54.31

40. Stacey Cook, Mammoth, CA, 1:54.74

47. Megan McJames, Park City, UT, 1:56.10

Weather service warns of dangerous conditions for Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Snow turned to rain Friday and is continuing on the South Shore this morning.

The National Weather Service in Reno says the white stuff is going to return today to lake level this afternoon, with the heaviest snowfall tonight through Sunday when it could be 2 to 4 inches per hour.



"Overall snowfall totals of 5 to 10 feet are likely in the Sierra above 7,000 feet which will significantly increase avalanche danger," NWS officials said. "Dangerous and life threatening conditions are expected in the Sierra due to rapid snow accumulations … near zero visibility and strong winds."

The Sierra Avalanche Center lists the conditions as "extreme" for today.

The nasty weather on Dec. 17 had law enforcement scrambling to keep up with the wrecks and spinouts.

Between 6am and noon Friday the Nevada Highway Patrol handled 47 accidents in Northern Nevada. And the accidents continued throughout the day.

A winter storm warning is in effect until 4pm Monday. One to 3 feet of snow is still expect at lake level.

Here are some of the storm totals the NWS has: Truckee and Tahoe City received 15 inches of snow as of 6:43am Saturday, Garnderville 1 foot as of 11:23pm Friday, and Reno 6 inches as of 11:30pm Friday.

Don’t put the shovel or blower away because snow is in the forecast for the coming week. The highs will be in the 30s and the lows in the 20s in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Guest Zamboni driver brings attention to SLT Ice Arena

Howie Nave – comic, radio guy, *Lake Tahoe News* movie reviewer – is also a huge San Jose Sharks fan.

He is pictured here in the jersey the team gave him when he sang the national anthem at the Shark Tank a few years ago.



Howie Nave driving the Zamboni at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena.

Photo/Provided

Nave wore the jersey this week as he drove the Zamboni at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena.

Nave’s goal is to lure the Sharks to South Tahoe to practice in the off-season.