

Nevada looks to change economic incentives

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Four years ago, the focus of Nevada economic development was creating jobs. With tens of thousands of people out of work, almost any job was welcome as the state tried to claw its way out of the Great Recession.

But with the economy rebounding, officials are looking beyond just job creation to laying the groundwork for a whole new economy based on high tech – from drones and advanced manufacturing to health care and renewable energy.

That shift could bring a change in priorities for tax abatements.

A bill being proposed by the Governor's Office of Economic Development would reduce the amount of abatements available to companies that pay below the state's average wage, depending on the county location and unemployment rate.

Read the whole story

Despite Uber petition, service still illegal in Nev.

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

To Uber, the ride-sharing transportation network company, and its legion of fans, it's an easy fix.

Copy and paste legislation that's been enacted somewhere else, run it before the Nevada Legislature for a vote, get Gov. Brian Sandoval to sign the bill and Uber on.

More than 26,000 people have signed a petition asking Sandoval and Attorney General Adam Laxalt to lead the way toward allowing the company to operate in the state.

There already are 22 jurisdictions that have laws in place that enable Uber and similar companies to do what they do – accept requests from customers through a smartphone app to provide transportation in their personal vehicles.

There's only one problem: Under Nevada transportation laws, the service is illegal.

Read the whole story

Barton may have trauma designation this week

Updated Jan. 27 3:25pm: Barton received the trauma designation from the Board of Supervisors.

By Kathryn Reed

In a matter of hours Barton Memorial Hospital is likely to become the only trauma center in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The final hurdle is for approval from the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

The electeds on Jan. 27 are expected to sign the paperwork to make this a reality. The board is being asked to certify the designation.

“Barton’s goal is to provide high quality and appropriate care for our patients around the clock with compassion and expertise. Trauma III designation means we can help patients receive the best care and treatment available,” surgeon Kim Evans told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Barton originally had hoped to be a trauma hospital two years ago. The amount of paperwork and hoops to jump through forced the delay. The American College of Surgeons’ Committee on Trauma has 160 items a level three center must meet. Barton has done so and passed the verification visit on the first try.

“We have a very active population and a high volume of visitors year-round, which means our potential needs for trauma patients is greater than our population indicates. This also shows in our patient data – approximately 30 percent of our emergency visits are trauma-related,” Evans said.

There are 51 trauma centers in California, with Barton being one of four level three facilities verified by ACS.

“Trauma III designation recognizes Barton Hospital as a critical access point for patients seeking trauma care. Unlike other hospital facilities, trauma centers guarantee the resources for in-depth emergency care and the immediate availability of emergency medicine physicians, surgeons, nurses, lab and X-ray technicians, and life support equipment 24-hours a day,” Evans explained.

Renown Medical Center in Reno is a level two facility, while UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento is a level one. These levels are usually found in urban centers.

Barton has been operating as though it’s a trauma center. So it is not like there will be immediate, dramatic changes. The additional staff required for a level three has been hired, including a trauma program coordinator.

"In the long run, the care may be less expensive for patients. A patient may avoid being transferred to another trauma center and the patient's treatment plan includes follow-up and injury prevention program," Cate Neal, registered nurse and trauma program coordinator, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

However, added costs are possible from Barton.

"An activation fee is only implemented if the patient meets the trauma activation criteria for a full or modified trauma," Evans said. "This fee covers the additional cost of care including staff and equipment implemented to help someone with a life-threatening injury."

A major difference with being a trauma center would be the coordinated care approach. The team concept starts when a person is admitted and then all the way through rehab. Patients are also likely to see more in-depth care and have it administered faster.

"Injury prevention programs will be incorporated into a patient's treatment plan, depending on the injury. Examples of programs include concussion awareness, alcohol prevention outreach, and physical therapy," Neal said.

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Notes:

- The Board of Supervisors meeting is Jan. 27 starting at 9am in Placerville.

Sheriff's departments have highest-paid local government workers

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

David Keyes didn't wear a suit or work in an executive office, but he was the capital region's highest-paid local government employee in 2013.

As a captain in the Placer County Sheriff's Office, Keyes received a base salary of \$122,000, according to recently released data from the State Controller's Office. When he retired in November 2013, Keyes also received \$150,000 for unused sick time, \$19,000 for unused vacation and \$64,000 for other incentives, boosting his final-year pay to \$355,000.

Keyes, 53, did not return messages from the *Sacramento Bee*. Since retiring, he has been able to enjoy his longtime hobby of photography, according to a website showcasing his work.

Keyes' law enforcement sector has more people than any other category on the region's list of 1,000 highest-paid local government employees, The Bee found in an analysis of the State Controller's Office 2013 data. In Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer and Yolo counties, 237 sworn employees from sheriff's departments and 57 sworn officers from police departments were on the list.

Sworn personnel from sheriff's departments received an average of \$106,000, compared to \$73,000 for all local government employees in the region, the analysis found.

Read the whole story

Scheduling conflict infuriates freeskiers



Reno freeskier David Wise trains at Northstar.
Photo/Provided

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

ASPEN – David Wise of Reno battles gravity as an Olympic and X Games gold medal halfpipe skier. Now he's battling an equally stubborn force: the International Ski Federation, or FIS.

Widely embraced as the world's best pipe skier, Wise lost his world champion title last week when he, like most of the world's top freeskiers and snowboarders, opted to attend Aspen's Winter X Games instead of the FIS world championships in Austria.

The 24-year-old Wise, who skis for Northstar, blasted the international federation for refusing to reschedule the world championship halfpipe contest – which was put on the calendar five years ago – to accommodate the athletes whose careers have flourished thanks to the X Games.

The scheduling conflict is a symptom of a larger issue,

freeskiers say. There's a perceived lack of respect for freeskiing and snowboarding from the sports' governing body. The fear is that new school freeskiing could see its freewheeling style stifled by the decidedly old guard FIS.

Wise, who spent three years pleading with the FIS to adjust the schedule, wrote in a scathing post on his blog last week that it is an "unforgivable blunder; one based in arrogance and in a true lack of respect." Dozens of the top-ranked skiers and snowboarders on the World Cup halfpipe and slopestyle circuit did not show up at Kreischburg, Austria, last week.

Read the whole story

Kings Canyon reveals Carson's rural side



Dry, short grasses dot the landscape in the Kings Canyon

area of Carson City. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

CARSON CITY – Despite a more than 20-foot waterfall tumbling down less than a half mile from the trailhead, the Kings Canyon area is so dry it looks more like summer than winter.

Dry sage and anemic manzanita dot the landscape early on. Ironically, it's this dryness that has driven us east, out of the basin in search of alternative winter recreation because there are so few snowshoeing opportunities right now in Tahoe. Even on this trail there ought to be more than the one patch of snow we saw.

This swath of land known as Kings Canyon is owned by the U.S. Forest and has been public property since 1997.



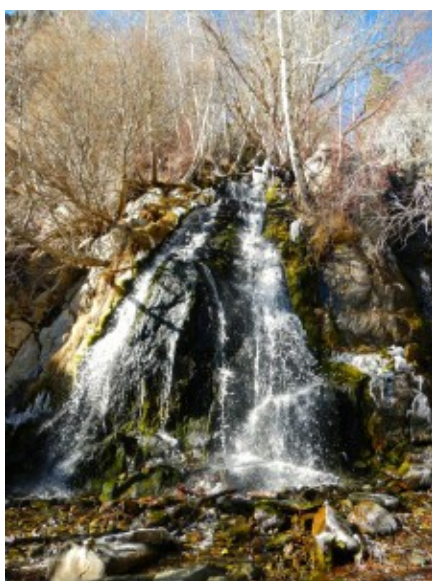
The five dogs lead their people uphill.

Way back when this land was home to the Washoe Indians. The canyon became a gateway to Lake Tahoe during the Gold Rush. Lumber was brought through the canyon during the Comstock era to build the silver mines of Nevada.

The area gets its name from Benjamin King, a doctor who built

a ranch in the 1800s. Today there is a huge, modern house at the start of the trailhead. Other residences line the road leading up to what is the base of the Sierra.

Pete and Raymond Borda started a sheep farm on the land in 1947. They would drive sheep between Carson and Dayton until the 1970s. By then Carson City had experienced a population boom that prevented the drives from crossing the highway. Family members opted to donate their land for the public to use.



Plenty of water still cascades from the waterfall.

Today an extensive trail network exists. After checking out the waterfall (it's 0.3 miles from the trailhead and dead-ends there), we headed out on the North Kings Canyon Upper Loop Trail. The marker said it is 1 mile. It is single-track dirt with small rocks that make it necessary to look down a bit. This trail doesn't allow bikes or horses, but they are OK on the fire roads. We estimate having hiked 6 miles roundtrip.

It's a pretty steady climb, but it doesn't take long for good views of Carson City to reveal themselves.

We come to a fork where we head left onto what looks like a fire road. This was the first time for me, Rosemary and Brooke to explore this area. And none of us had a map, so we winged it when it came to deciding where to go. We were pretty sure we wouldn't follow the early pioneers and walk all the way to Tahoe. Plus, we had five dogs among us to be the trail leaders.

This road, though, had few turns. It kept going up. Luckily, the temperature was ideal considering the sun was beating down on us and we had no shade. This would not be the hike to do in mid-summer.

But soon we were among the trees and the mercury dropped substantially. Ice at various spots where there was water was a clear reminder on this Saturday in January that it really is winter.

The foliage is healthier here where water is more abundant. But there are also stark reminders of the 2004 Waterfall Fire that burned 8,700 acres. It started from an abandoned campfire.



Ice and a bamboo-like plant
at one of the creeks.

While there is a warning at the trailhead this is bear and mountain lion territory, wildlife was scarce on our outing. One magpie was spotted and we heard a chipmunk or squirrel.

We finally hit a plateau where we ran into a couple from

Carson City who told us the route we were on would take us to Ash Canyon. We took their advice to go a bit farther to get a great view of Carson City and then turn around.

They told us about a different route back. Had it not been for their multiple cairns and arrow drawn in the dirt, we would never have seen the abrupt right turn onto the single-track. This dirt trail was a more gradual descent without rocks compared to the path that got us to this point.

At various times the drop-offs are rather daunting. We tried not to look down. It would be a long, painful tumble.

Views are beautiful and vast.

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Getting there: From South Lake Tahoe take Highway 50 east to Carson City. Turn left at the base of Spooner Summit in Carson, left on West 5th Street, right on Division Street, left on West King Street. The road dead-ends at the trailhead.

Sandoval stands by increasing taxes

By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette-Journal

Gov. Brian Sandoval has a message – or challenge – to those who criticize his budget, which includes \$1.1 billion in new and extended taxes:

So what's your plan to finance Nevada's future – especially its struggling education system?

“I have put my marker out there in terms of where I want the state to go and where we have to invest when it comes to k-through-12, higher education, health and human services and public safety,” Sandoval said during an interview with the Reno Gazette-Journal on Wednesday.

“And for those who don’t want to do that, then they need to do the same thing,” Sandoval said. “They need to say, ‘This is where I am going to cut.’ Because right now, they get to say, ‘I have 12 votes not to raise your taxes.’ But there are consequences with that.”

The “12 votes” refers to a statement Assemblywoman Michele Fiore, R-Las Vegas, made to the Republican Men’s Club of Northern Nevada on Tuesday.

Read the whole story

Calif. state pay increased \$1.1 billion last year

By Jon Ortiz and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

California state workers’ salaries rose a total \$1.1 billion last year, according to payroll data, while the number of state employees also grew.

The State Controller’s Office wrote paychecks for \$16.43 billion in 2014, up 7 percent from the year before. The increase followed three years of essentially flat payroll costs for the state.

Meanwhile, the number of full-time and part-time state workers grew from about 242,000 to about 245,000, or almost 2 percent.

The data, which exclude state university employees and legislative staff, show the largest dollar-amount payroll increases occurred in the state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (up \$279 million); the prison system's medical caregiver, California Correctional Health Care Services (\$91 million); the Department of State Hospitals (\$82 million); the California Highway Patrol (\$71 million); and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (\$68 million).

Read the whole story

Upgrades coming on key South Shore bike trails

By Kathryn Reed

Thousands of dollars in bicycle trail and ball field improvements on the South Shore were approved Friday by the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority.

Money for the projects comes from Measure S/R dollars. This voter approved initiative affects the California side of the South Shore.

The 6-year-old Sawmill bridge that crosses the Upper Truckee River on Highway 50 is in need of a new top coat because the concrete is disintegrating. There are so many loose particles on the span that it is getting close to the point where riding across it on a road bike could mean an instant flat tire.

While there was a lawsuit between the builder and El Dorado County regarding the bridge, it had more to do with days worked and not the short lifespan of the work.

County officials are hoping to find a product that will last 20 years.



Sawmill bike bridge is in need of a new overcoat.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Deterioration of the current bridge is being blamed on the sand and salt Caltrans spreads on the highway, the expansion and contraction of material from temperatures, and not having laid down materials in optimal conditions.

The board on Jan. 23 agreed to use \$87,000 to help resurface this bridge.

Doing so would create a smooth bicycle path from Meyers to South Lake Tahoe because the final phase of the path on Sawmill Road is slated for construction this summer, too.

The recommendation for this and other projects came to the JPA board from the Bicycle Advisory Committee.

The committee also suggested, and the board approved, \$70,000 to rehab the class 1 trail between Trout Creek and Edgewood Circle between Lakeview Commons and the property where the Alta Mira building used to be.

This route will be close to the highway and is not what has been long been called phase 2 of Lakeview Commons. The continuation of the bike trail on those plans calls for a cantilever bridge that would jut out onto the lake and get people away from the road. But lack of funding is stalling that project.

The other bike related allocation was for \$10,000 to be spent on wayfinding signs along class 1 trails.

When it comes to ball fields in the area, the T-ball fields will get the most attention this coming season – in the form of new turf.

While bleachers are desired at the Little League field, there may not be the money to make that happen.

The fields committee is going to seek donations from service clubs to pay for the bleachers. If that doesn't work, there are old bleachers that could be brought in.

Study: Illegal Super Bowl bets will total \$3.8 bil.

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Americans will illegally wager 38 times more money on this year's Super Bowl than they will legally in Nevada, the only state with full-fledged sports betting, according to a projection from a casino industry trade group.

American Gaming Association President Geoff Freeman told a gathering of mayors in Washington, D.C., on Thursday that his organization expects the Super Bowl to elicit \$3.8 billion in

illegal wagers compared with Nevada's legal \$100 million.

Freeman said the estimate on those illegal bets was a first for his organization, but his prepared remarks didn't specify how they determined that number.

Read the whole story