

Tahoe wants to be part of surge in electric vehicles



This BMW, left, and two electric Teslas show a small variety in the EV market. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

KINGS BEACH – Creating an electric highway in the Sierra is under way. It would encompass Highway 50 on the South Shore and Interstate 80 on the North Shore, and points around the basin.

This isn't a new concept. It has been talked about since at least 2006 when Truckee Donner Public Utility District had a three-year contract with the Electric Auto Association to provide electricity for free to three plug-ins.

But like most things in the Tahoe-Truckee area, actual implementation takes decades.

Advocates for more electric vehicles and places to charge them gathered in Kings Beach this spring for a summit.

“Transportation is the No. 2 source of greenhouse gas emissions at Lake Tahoe,” Devin Middlebrook with the Tahoe Regional Transportation District said. The benefit of electric vehicles is eliminating tailpipes spewing noxious pollutants.

These vehicles – whether a total EV or a hybrid – are no longer an anomaly. And with improved technology, it’s not unrealistic to drive one in snow country.

In 2016, U.S. consumers had the choice of 30 electric vehicles. Dealers sold 159,139 electric vehicles last year, with the top five being the Tesla Model S, Tesla Model X, Chevrolet Volt, Nissan Leaf and Ford Fusion Energi.

Of the 115 EVs owned by people in the region, 45 percent are Teslas. Most owners are in South Lake Tahoe, Truckee or Incline Village.

Projections are that by 2025 between 3 and 6 percent of daily trips will be via an electric vehicle, with those percentages increasing to between 6 and 14 percent by 2040.

In addition to better vehicles with more offerings – like all-wheel drive – there needs to be places for people to get a charge when they are commuting or traveling for fun. Batteries with insufficient charges are a reason some consumers don’t want to abandon their gas-powered vehicle.

Stations have improved in regards to how long it takes to charge a vehicle. And that infrastructure is starting to spread.

What may make the Tahoe-Truckee area more conducive to creating that electric highway is the recognition by Liberty Utilities, the regulatory agencies and businesses that electric vehicles are here to stay, and that the benefits are multi-faceted.

Tourists expected to drive Nev. marijuana sales

By Associated Press

Now that Nevada has approved an early start to recreational cannabis sales, existing medical marijuana companies in the state are readying for a burst of new business that could equate to tens of millions of dollars in additional revenue this year.

The early rollout will make Nevada the fifth state with an operational recreational market and the first to launch since last November's election, when voters in four states approved adult-use programs. Nevada will also be the first new recreational state to go live under the Trump administration.

Nevada's recreational marijuana industry got the thumbs-up for an "early start" program Monday, when state tax authorities approved temporary regulations that allow licensed medical marijuana companies to begin adult-use sales July 1.

According to *Marijuana Business Daily*, Nevada's recreational market could generate \$75 million or more in sales this year and \$450 million-\$550 million annually down the road. Tourist spending is expected to account for a heavy portion of sales.

Read the whole story

Placer County-Lahontan streamline permitting

Placer County has entered an agreement with the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board so the county can sign off on grading permits for residents of eastern Placer County that previously required a trip to water board offices in South Lake Tahoe.

The agreement offers a simpler, more efficient permitting process for applicants by allowing the county to review and permit small construction projects that disturb less an acre of land. Previously, those projects required applicants to file directly with Lahontan.

This applies to projects in the eastern portion of the county, but not those in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Approval for residential projects in the basin that need Tahoe Regional Planning Agency sign-off can also be done by the county at its offices at 775 North Lake Blvd. in Tahoe City.

STHS' next principal eager to do great things

By Kathryn Reed

Passion and energy spill forth from Carline Sinkler as she talks about her next job – principal of South Tahoe High School.

“I’m excited about all the work being done, career technology

education, getting students ready for college and life," Sinkler told *Lake Tahoe News*. "What impressed me was the enthusiasm of the staff. They are student-centered and forward thinking. I feel like I'm coming into a community that is poised to do incredible work."

She wants to build on the strengths that already exist.



Carline Sinkler will be South Tahoe High School's principal starting in the 2017-18 school year.

Photo/Provided

"Her interpersonal skills, enthusiasm and vision will enhance and strengthen the existing programs at South Tahoe High School," Superintendent Jim Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We loved her mission statement: where you pursue a communitywide vision of thriving, future-ready students and schools through a collaborative, innovative learning-centered leadership."

He said Sinkler made a great connection with both interview panels. The district interviewed five of the 29 people who applied. Sinkler's first day will be July 19 at an annual salary of \$134,040.

Today she is principal of Herbert Hoover Middle School in San Francisco; a job she has had since 2013.

Sinkler, 50, has done a lot work around college and career

readiness at the middle school level, and wants to take that to the next level.

“One of the things I’m really excited about is working around the sports medicine academy. I think that is super, super neat,” she said.

One of her first jobs will be to ensure everything is in place for the visit next school year from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in regards to accreditation. The school is finishing the first of two years on probationary accreditation status. Chad Houck was let go because of the accreditation issues.

Sinkler said she has looked at what the school and district have done to prepare for the next evaluation. While she knows it will be a challenge, Sinkler is confident regarding what is being done and believes the school will prevail.

While going from such an urban environment to the rural mountains might seem like 180-degree change, for Sinkler, coming to Tahoe in some ways feels like going home. She grew up in the upper peninsula in Michigan so she knows all about snow. She would cross country ski to the bus stop. Plus, she lives in Marin County near open space and not in The City.

A knee injury keeps her off the downhill slopes, but she is an avid cross country skier and snowshoer. Mountain biking is another favorite sport. She’s already done the Flume Trail. Paddleboarding is something else she enjoys doing with her husband. The two were even married at Emerald Bay.

LTCC hires VP of Administrative Services



Russi Egan

Lake Tahoe Community College board of trustees at a special meeting May 18 agreed to hire Russi Egan as vice president of Administrative Services.

She currently has the same position at Palo Verde College in Southern California, a job she has had since December 2015. However, she has been with the school since 2004 where she has been the chief business officer and fiscal services manager.

The two-year contract starts July 1. She will be making \$139,481 a year, plus \$18,456 in health and welfare benefits.

The position became available earlier this year when Jeff DeFranco, who had the job, was hired to be president of LTCC.

"She works at a college that's very much like LTCC, and she understands both the positives and the challenges that come with running a small college. She has a strong reputation at Palo Verde as a fixer who came in during an economically difficult time and turned things around," DeFranco said in a statement.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Shooting suspect apparently commits suicide on I-80 in Truckee

By Nashelly Chavez and Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The man identified as a possible suspect in Wednesday's homicide in Lincoln died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound after his vehicle was stopped by law enforcement officers on Interstate 80 near Truckee, authorities said.

The shooting was reported to Lincoln police about 8:20am by a man driving in the 2400 block of Lincoln Airpark Drive – the same location where a woman was later found sitting in the driver's seat of a vehicle in a home's garage. The woman, who was said to be in her 30s, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Investigators had identified a possible suspect, and that his vehicle had been spotted eastbound on Interstate 80 near Truckee.

[Read the whole story](#)

Almost 4-foot drop in Lake Tahoe's clarity

By Kathryn Reed

It's clear that things are getting murkier. Lake Tahoe's clarity diminished by nearly 4 feet in 2016.

In 2016 the average depth of clarity was 69.2 feet, which is a 3.9-foot decrease from 2015. In 2015, clarity dropped 4.8 feet. The worst overall reading was in 1997 at 64.1 feet. Measurements have been taken since 1968, when the Secchi disk could be seen at 102.4 feet.

Researchers from UC Davis released the numbers May 18. Scientists use what looks like a white dinner plate to determine the lake's clarity. It is dropped over the side of a boat at several locations throughout the year and then how far someone can see it is the measurement.

Climate change is being blamed for the brunt of the decline.

"In 2015, clarity was reduced by relatively warm layers of turbid water entering near the lake surface. In 2016, the clarity was reduced by the early onset of spring favoring the growth of light blocking blooms of very small algal cells," Tahoe Environmental Research Center officials said in a press release.

The numbers were better in winter than summer. The best reading was 95.1 feet on Jan. 25, and the worst was 44.3 feet on June 7. The winter average of 83.3 feet was the highest since 2012. However, the summer numbers were alarming. There was a 16.7-foot decline in one year.

A large *Cyclotella* bloom is part of the reason for the summer problem. This single-cell algal species is able to thrive as Lake Tahoe's waters warm. In 2016, the lake's temperature was at record-high level.

"Climate change is impacting Lake Tahoe. TRPA and its partners are committed to working with researchers to better understand the threats a warming climate poses, and to promote solutions that will improve the resiliency of Lake Tahoe's environment

and communities,” Tahoe Regional Planning Agency spokesman Tom Lotshaw told *Lake Tahoe News*.

While experts point to the five-year clarity average of 73.1 feet surpassing the 2016 interim restoration target of 71 feet, that average will keep dropping if the trend of lower visibility continues.

Still, scientists are confident there has been a leveling off of sorts. The nearly \$2 billion spent on environmental improvements in the Lake Tahoe Basin since the inaugural Lake Tahoe Summit in 1997 is credited with stemming what had been years of degrading clarity. Reducing fine sediment particles from the lake is the biggest change, and one that is ongoing.

“Storm water reductions are contributing to the improved winter clarity,” Tahoe Regional Planning Agency spokesman Tom Lotshaw told *Lake Tahoe News*. “From local, state, and federal governments reducing storm water pollution from roads and restoring natural areas like streams, marshes, and wetlands, to homeowners installing measures to capture and infiltrate storm water on their properties, this work is helping protect and restore Lake Tahoe’s famous water clarity.”

What all of these numbers don’t reflect is what goes on along the shore of Lake Tahoe where people have the most interaction with the water. The near shore, as scientists call it, with its algae and ever-increasing brown color is a whole different topic.

S. Lake Tahoe McDonald’s

starting from scratch

It won't exactly be supersized, but the new McDonald's at the Y in South Lake Tahoe will be modern.

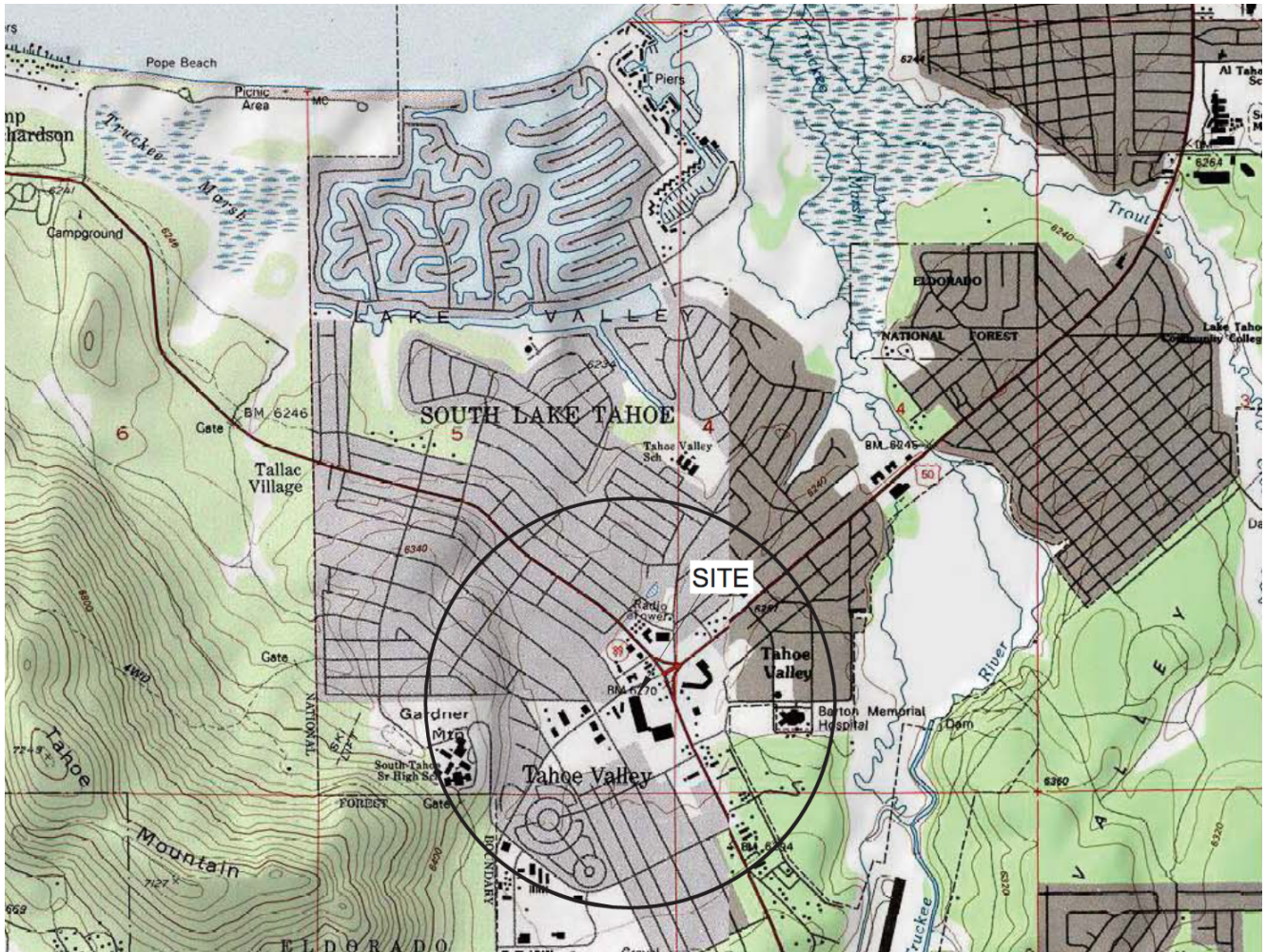
It's not just a remodel, it's a whole new building. The 40-year-old structure is being taken down and by September the new restaurant should be open.

From the outside the facade is intended to have a more Tahoe feel. An additional drive-through lane is designed to reduce the back up in the parking area. Emissions from idling vehicles is one reason the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency no longer allows new drive throughs. The two lanes will cut down on that idle time. To accommodate the two lanes the kids' play area will be a thing of the past.

Bob Humason, who owns both McDonald's franchises in town, is allowing most of the Y employees to work at the restaurant on the edge of Linear Park for the summer.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Lahontan demands solution to toxic plume in SLT



The circle represents the known area of the PCE plume in South Lake Tahoe. Image/LRWQCB

By Kathryn Reed

After decades of a toxic plume percolating underground near the Y in South Lake Tahoe, the state has set hard deadlines for the responsible parties to do something about the situation.

Tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, has adversely affected the drinking water in the area, necessitating that wells belonging to Tahoe Key Water Company and Lukins Brothers Water Company be taken off line. Lukins and the Keys water systems are building filtration units to treat their water so the inactive wells can be put back into service.

Research shows the chemicals were released from the Lake Tahoe Laundry Works, which was located at the Y in the Raley's

center. That is a known source for PCE contamination and had originally been thought to be the source of the plumes below TJ Maxx and Classic Cue. PCE at the Y was first detected in 1989. Since then more than one PCE plume has been found.

PCE was a commonly used chemical in dry cleaning and automotive businesses. California in 2008 banned new PCE machines. And all such machines are to be out of commission by 2023. However, PCE will still be able to be used.

A letter dated May 12 was sent by Lahontan to Seven Springs Limited Partnership, Fox Capital Management Corporation, Bobby Pages Inc., and Connolly Development Inc. Each has 75 days from that date to provide a work plan to Lahontan. There may be some back and forth to get to a work plan that is agreed to by the state agency and the four known responsible parties. Those four entities will then have 30 days to implement the plan.

"We are pleased to see that the cleanup and abatement order issued by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board now recognizes that there is insufficient evidence to attribute the regional PCE plume in the South Lake Tahoe area solely to the former dry cleaner. Fox welcomes the regional board's desire to identify all of the contributing sources to the contamination, and to ask all responsible parties to address the associated environmental concerns," Scott Reisch, attorney representing Fox, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "A Fox predecessor was the general partner of a now-dissolved entity that formerly owned the site in the 1970s and early 1980s, while a dry cleaner operated at the site. Fox never owned or operated the property."

For the past eight years Fox has been working to remediate the PCE issue.

"What is new and different is they have never fully delineated the plume; where it begins and ends, that is their

responsibility,” Patty Kouyoumdjian, executive director of the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The depth and length of the plume will be determined in this new work plan that will be developed.

Kouyoumdjian said one outcome is to determine who is responsible for what. It may be that other parties not known today will be uncovered.

There has been disagreement among named parties and Lahontan about who is responsible, especially based on movement of the plume.

In an April 4 letter to Lahontan from PES Environmental, an engineering and environmental services firm representing Seven Springs and Fox, it criticizes the water board for dismissing studies without reason, and questions its findings. The two sides can’t even agree on which direction groundwater flows from the old laundry site. PES contends the data show there are multiple sources for PCE, not just the dry cleaners.

Lahontan plans to have a public meeting, possibly in June, to gather more input on the topic.

Getting the work plan in place should also open doors to funding sources, including from the State Water Board.

“This is an important step forward to deal with the regional plume and finding a final cleanup plan for the entire plume and make sure we protect our drinking water resources that are precious,” Kouyoumdjian said.

Until further tests are done it’s not immediately known how the heavy winter snowfall and subsequent rising of the groundwater table may have impacted the plume.

Ranch, wildlife fears could sink Nev. water bill

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Fears that mining companies and Las Vegas development will drain rural Nevada dry could sink an update to state water law.

Ranchers, anglers and environmentalists united Tuesday in opposition to Assembly Bill 298, which would revise Nevada water law.

The bill seeks to define in state law terms such as “perennial yield,” and “environmental soundness.

[Read the whole story](#)