

White House: Ban on recreational pot to be enforced

By Jennifer Kaplan, Bloomberg

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said he expects the Justice Department to increase enforcement of laws prohibiting the recreational use of marijuana, a departure from the Obama administration's less aggressive stance as states began legalizing recreational as well as medical use of the drug.

"There are two distinct issues here: medical marijuana and recreational marijuana," Spicer told reporters Thursday. "There's still a federal law that we need to abide by when it comes to recreational marijuana and other drugs of that nature."

The Justice Department could decide to enforce federal law and shut down businesses in the medical and recreational cannabis industries even in states where they have been made legal.

[Read the whole story](#)

Atmospheric rivers wreak havoc around the globe



Lake Valley firefighters this week help a Meyers resident with a flooding issue.
Photo/LVFPD

By Christopher Joyce, NPR

“Atmospheric river” is a colorful term for a sinuous plume of moisture that travels up from the tropics – a single plume can carry more water than the Mississippi River at its mouth. But new research shows that atmospheric rivers are also among the most damaging weather systems around.

The atmospheric rivers that soaked California this winter did some good – they ended an epic drought in the state.

“This has been a very active winter, atmospheric river-wise,” reports Jeff Zimmerman of the National Weather Service. “We’ve probably had 10 or more ... this winter.” The norm is just a few; being a La Nina year, with cooler water in the eastern Pacific, was part of the reason for the abundance.

Read the whole story

Agreement clears way for Caesars emergence from Chapter 11

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The terms of a merger of two subsidiaries of Caesars Entertainment have been amended, clearing a path for the company's emergence from Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

In a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission Tuesday, the company reported new terms for the merger of Caesars Entertainment Corp. and Caesars Acquisition Co.

The amendment is a milestone toward launching the New Caesars and completing Caesars Entertainment Operating Company, Inc.'s court-supervised restructuring process. The New Caesars will result from the combination of Caesars Entertainment and Caesars Acquisition.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline.

Read the whole story

TRPA rethinking how to deliver transit in Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Free transit throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin,

integrated between the shores, and with service every 30 minutes. That's the goal by 2021.

Morgan Beryl, senior transportation planner with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, on Feb. 22 went over the highlights of the draft 2017 Regional Transportation Plan with the Governing Board.

Technology has allowed transportation officials to get a better handle on how many people are actually coming to the basin – 24 million a year, in 10 million vehicles.

Beryl showed two pictures – one of gridlock (today), the other open streets (the future). The goal of the plan, she said, is to create the future.

Unlike so many planning documents, this one isn't just ideas. It has some how-to components, with achievable short-term goals, and loftier long-term goals if money were not an obstacle. Managing congestion, free bus service, bike paths that connect to places people want to go, and alternative fuel infrastructure are the immediate goals. (Yes, resuming service to Meyers is in the plans.)

Beryl told *Lake Tahoe News* the free bus service is attainable with current federal funding and grants. What is collected at the fare box isn't a large part of the revenue stream. When BlueGo, the South Shore bus service, offers free rides through spare the air days, people take a seat, proving there is a local desire for free transit.

The problem is the funding needed to keep the system operational is not guaranteed. That needs to be worked out before free bus service is offered. Officials are studying how other areas pay for free transit. Many locales have some sort of tax so there is a more defined revenue stream.

If buses came more often – it's every hour now – the thinking is more people would get on board. If buses went to more

recreation areas, more people are apt to forego their personal vehicle. If buses allowed more bikes or had storage underneath like Greyhound does for personal items, people might not drive themselves. If BlueGo and TART – the North Shore system – were linked, it would mean the ability to commute as well as play throughout the basin.

Whatever is created needs to be flexible to handle the fluctuation in demand bases on the influx of tourists.

Sass-y talk at TRPA



An odd exchange with Austin Sass, who represents the city of South Lake Tahoe on the Governing Board, and staff involved the use of Lake Tahoe Airport and hotel rates.

Sass asked if the airport was part of the transportation study. Staff said not really other than to acknowledge it is a general aviation airport. Sass said, “The city’s decision on commercial service can be reversed down the line. If you gave us a good reason, we might reverse it.”

Perhaps Sass doesn’t realize TRPA sued the city regarding the airport, which led to the 1992 Lake Tahoe Airport Master Plan Settlement Agreement. TRPA is not about to ask the city to resurrect commercial air service.

The city went through a lengthy master plan process recently that culminated in the council deciding not to pursue commercial service and to give up its certificate with the FAA that allowed for such operations. That master plan cost more than \$300,000.

It was obvious Wednesday that Sass has no idea what it takes to bring back commercial service. It’s more than just taking a vote of the council.

On top of that, there would be the subsidy needed to make it happen even if an airline wanted to come to South Lake Tahoe.

Then Sass repeated things he read on Facebook where a marketing guy said higher hotel rates is the solution to getting fewer people to come here, which will help dissolve the traffic congestion issue.

In December, LosAngelesHotels.org reported that South Lake Tahoe had the highest hotel rates in the state for New Year’s Eve. Clearly, higher rates don’t stop people from coming to Tahoe.

Fewer people in town would help the roads, but not the economy.

Sass also asked if TRPA could mandate visitors use public transit. “No” was the answer.

—Kathryn Reed

Creating parking areas for people is something else that is being talked about. This would be a 180-degree policy change for TRPA. This bi-state regulatory agency has a penchant for approving projects with inadequate parking with the thinking it would get people out of their cars. The problem is people

have nothing else to get into because bus service is abysmal.

Park and rides are common in larger areas. But even finding a spot to park at a public transit hub can be difficult as anyone who has ridden BART in the Bay Area knows.

Board member Shelly Aldean suggested areas with large lots might be encouraged to add space, albeit coverage would be an issue, that would be dedicated to those using transit. This would be for people who don't have immediate access to transit, but could drive to a stop.

More long term goals include working with regional partners – Sacramento, Bay Area, Reno – to integrate ways to get tourists to Tahoe without them all driving. Rail is one idea. Having them park at an airport and come via bus is another. Or if they are flying into the region, to then have reliable shuttles to the basin.

It was acknowledged, though, that the basin needs to provide reliable public transit before regional transit solutions are solidified. Technology will help with that in being able to provide real-time information to customers and transit providers.

The TRPA transportation document was first approved in late 2012 and per federal law must be updated every four years.

Missing in action at Wednesday's meeting was half of the basin's local representation on the board. Neither El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel nor Douglas County Commissioner Nancy McDermid were in attendance.

Today the Governing Board will convene for its annual strategic planning session. More detail about the transportation plan and how to fund aspects of it are expected to be discussed.

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Notes:

- Comments on the draft plan will be taken until March 24; email them to mberyl@trpa.org.
 - The plan is available **online**.
 - The TRPA Governing Board is expected to approve the final plan on April 26.
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Nevada AP scores above national average

By Meghan Delaney, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada students appear to have broken the code in at least one education measure.

A new report released Wednesday by the College Board shows that 22.5 percent of Nevada high school students passed advanced placement exams, slightly higher than the national average.

Nationwide, 21.9 percent of students who take the placement exams earn a score of three or higher, on a scale of one to five. Massachusetts led the nation with 31 percent of students passing the courses.

Read the whole story

Nev. constitutional amendment would affirm same-sex marriage

By Seth A. Richardson, Reno Gazette-Journal

Despite being legal nationwide, a Nevada assemblyman wants to solidify same-sex marriage into the state constitution to prevent courts from overturning it in the state.

The U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage across the country with a 2015 ruling. Assistant Assembly Majority Leader Nelson Araujo, D-Las Vegas, is proposing to make that change a permanent part of the Nevada Constitution – which currently defines marriage as between one man and one woman – in case the 2015 decision is overturned.

Araujo announced his Assembly Joint Resolution 2 in January, which would amend the Nevada Constitution to “issue marriage licenses to couples regardless of gender.” The amendment had its first hearing on Tuesday and would essentially align Nevada’s Constitution with current federal law.

Read the whole story

Heavenly snowboarder survives night in wilderness



An X in the snow, to the right, alerted search teams to the missing snowboarder on Feb. 22. Photo/EDSO

By Kathryn Reed

A snowboarder spent the night out in a snowstorm Tuesday after skiing out of bounds at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

Aarin Yu, 32, of Los Angeles was at the top of Canyon Express chairlift when he got disoriented because of the whiteout conditions. El Dorado County sheriff's deputies said he admitted to going under a rope, but thought he was still in bounds. There is rope in the area that separates the runs from the terrain park.

"He got into heavy, thick snow and trees and realized he was not on the resort's lands," sheriff's Deputy Greg Almos told *Lake Tahoe News*.

At 2:30pm he called ski patrol to say he was lost. They

scoured the area where Yu thought he was. At about 4:15pm Heavenly called El Dorado County Sheriff's Office realizing Yu probably was not inside the resort's boundaries.

The weather and time of day kept searchers from going out until daybreak on Feb. 22.

When Yu heard the helicopters he drew an X in the snow. That is what led CalStar to locate him. He had spent the night in a tree well less than a mile from the resort.

A California Highway Patrol helicopter with an EDSO search and rescue team member used a hoist to retrieve Yu from the snow. He was taken to Barton Memorial Hospital with exposure concerns, but nothing life threatening.

Kevin Cooper, spokesman for Heavenly, would not talk about the importance of why ropes are put up at the resort or anything else about this incident. Instead he deferred all comment to the sheriff's department.

Flood worries throughout Northern California

By Associated Press

Communities downstream from a Northern California reservoir gushing water for the first time in 20 years braced for flash floods and evacuations after authorities warned them to prepare for rising rivers and creeks.

Northern California is forecast to get a brief break from persistent downpours today but the surge of water released from Don Pedro Dam into the Tuolumne River in the foothills

east of Modesto is expected to reach overtopped levees later in the day.

Katie Whitley, who manages the Driftwood Mobile Home Park in Modesto, said residents nearest the river have been moving their trailers out since the start of the weekend.

"We're just holding our own," Whitley told the *Los Angeles Times*. "That's what we have to do. You just have to hope for the best. But you can expect it when you live on the river."

The water released from Don Pedro is expected to reach its peak along a stretch near Vernalis that's already at danger stage, said Tim Daly, a spokesman for the San Joaquin County Office of Emergency Services. The water isn't expected to spill over the levees but rather increase pressure on them, causing possible breaks in any weak places.

Farther south, the Anderson Dam in Santa Clara County reached capacity over the weekend and after heavy rain it began overflowing into the Coyote Creek.

Rescuers chest-deep in water steered boats full of people, some with babies and pets, from a San Jose neighborhood inundated Tuesday by water from the creek.

At least 225 residents were taken to dry land and rinsed with soap and water to prevent them from being sickened by floodwaters that had traveled through engine fuel, garbage, debris and over sewer lines, said San Jose Fire Capt. Mitch Matlow.

Rescuers went door-to-door searching for people who needed to leave the neighborhood. Only residents who could prove they had been cleaned of the floodwaters were allowed to board buses to shelters.

"The water started to seep in the driveway, and then it started to creep up into the front door. It kept getting worse

and worse," said Alex Hilario, who walked in knee-high water to get to his car and leave.

Earlier Tuesday, firefighters rescued five people stranded by flooding at a homeless camp along the same creek in San Jose.

Firefighters knocked on doors to tell residents to get out of their homes because the city does not have sirens or another emergency warning system, San Jose spokesman David Vossbrink said.

The rains were the latest produced by a series of storms generated by so-called atmospheric rivers that dump massive quantities of Pacific Ocean water on California after carrying it aloft from as far away as Hawaii.

One of the main routes to Lake Tahoe was in danger of collapsing after a roadway shoulder gave way following heavy storms, leaving a gaping hole on part of Highway 50, Caltrans engineer Jarrett Woodruff said.

Crews opened one lane Tuesday as Caltrans workers tried to fix the road failure after numerous mudslides blocked it for days in recent weeks.

The water level rose at Lake Oroville for the first time since authorities ordered an emergency evacuation of 188,000 people more than a week ago after a damaged spillway caused major flooding concerns.

The rains have saturated the once-drought stricken region and wreaked havoc for residents hit hard by the heavy rain. At least four people have died in the storms throughout the state in the last week.

Liberty assessing damage to electric lines



A broken pole in Ward Canyon took out service to part of Alpine Meadows on Feb. 21.
Photo/Provided

Tuesday night's storm caused extensive damage to Liberty Utilities infrastructure.

Via helicopter crews are assessing the damage on Feb. 22.

Glenshire in the Truckee area: Most customers without power; no estimated restoration time until helicopter assessment is complete.

Kings Beach downtown: A tree fell through a wire early Wednesday morning; crews on site making repairs with power expected to return by 3pm.

River Road/Silver Creek/Fir Crag Road/Highway 89: Avalanche danger still making access difficult; helicopter will patrol today to make damage assessment.

"Customers should continue to plan for extended outage. Smaller outages will be assessed and repaired as crews are available," Liberty said in a press release.

Nearly 1,200 customers in both Placer and Nevada counties are without power. Liberty said it could be a multi-day outage.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Crumbled Hwy. 50 will take months to repair



Part of Highway 50 near Bridal Veil Falls has fallen down the hillside. Photo/Caltrans

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

A section of Highway 50 crumbled farther down the hillside early Tuesday near Bridal Veil Falls, offering the latest dramatic reminder of how vulnerable Sierra highways have become in this winter's deluge of rain and snow.

Though the damaged road did not result in injuries, it prompted the closure of both westbound lanes and will reduce traffic to one lane in each direction for months to come. Crews will work on stabilizing the slope and fixing the highway, according to Caltrans.

"It's going to be a long-term closure," said Caltrans spokesman Steve Nelson. "The contractor is still figuring out how to fix the road; but whatever they come up with, it's going to take at least a few months."

[Read the whole story](#)