

California considers an end to bail

By Alexei Koseff, Sacramento Bee

On any given day, most inmates in California jails have not yet been convicted of a crime.

About 63 percent are being held awaiting trial, according to data collected by the Board of State and Community Corrections, an average of nearly 47,000 people. Federal statistics on the largest urban counties show that from 2000 to 2009, California kept unsentenced felony defendants in jail at nearly twice the rate of the rest of the country.

For state Sen. Bob Hertzberg, the problem is clear: Bail is "just too expensive." The median amount in the state is \$50,000, according to the Public Policy Institute of California, five times higher than the national average.

Read the whole story

Reno airport passenger, cargo numbers surge

Reno-Tahoe International Airport in 2016 had the highest year-over-year increase in passengers since 2004.

Last year 3,650,830 passengers used the airport, a 6.4 percent increase from 2015.

Additional flights and improved economy helped spur the

growth.

This is the main airport for people traveling to Lake Tahoe and Truckee.

2016 was the best year for cargo, with 156,410,910 pounds processed.

“The positive impact of major warehousing, e-commerce and distribution facilities in the region cannot be understated. While boosting the local economy, these facilities also increase air cargo growth at RNO,” President-CEO Marily Mora said in a statement. “As our region continues to grow and diversify, we expect to continue to see strong air cargo lift at Reno-Tahoe International.”

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Retiree obligations have stranglehold on LTUSD

CalSTRS & Cal PERS Increases

Year	STRS Increase	Increase Amount	PERS Increase	Increase Amount
2016-17	1.85%	\$371,318	2.041%	\$133,254
2017-18	1.85%	\$361,962	1.912%	\$127,732
2018-19	1.85%	\$369,229	2.9%	\$198,239
2019-20	1.85%	\$372,504	2.9%	\$203,988
2020-21	1.85%	\$375,944	3.3%	\$237,273
Total Increases through 2020-21	9.25%	\$1,850,957	13.053%	\$900,486

Source: *LTUSD*

By Kathryn Reed

Skyrocketing retirement costs are impacting Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

"It's a half million-dollar hit. We will not be able to keep it going," Superintendent Jim Tarwater said of the shift in CalSTRS and CalPERS allocations.

Certificated employees pay into the California State Teachers Retirement System, while classified staff are part of the California Public Employment Retirement System.

Billy Wessell, chief business and operations officer for LTUSD, gave a presentation last week to the board about what the governor's budget proposal will mean locally.

"He really didn't help us out in his budget," Wessell said of Gov. Jerry Brown. He called the PERS/STRS situation "scary."

LTUSD is contributing 12.58 percent to STRS this fiscal year. It's proposed to go up to 14.43 percent for 2017-18. Today the PERS contribution is 13.888 percent. Next year it is projected to be 15.8 percent.

These percentages are of an employee's salary that local taxpayers put into the worker's retirement account. Those workers get a defined amount of money for life when they retire and have stopped contributing in any way to the district.

When investments by PERS and STRS don't keep up with what those agencies have to pay retirees it is then up to member agencies via the taxpayers in those jurisdictions to come up with the shortfall.

Five years of increases for retiree benefits through 2020-21

is expected to cost LTUSD an additional \$2,751,443.

McClintock exits with police escort after raucous town hall

By Angela Hart, Sacramento Bee

Facing a packed auditorium and raucous crowd, Republican Rep. Tom McClintock on Saturday defended his party's national agenda and voiced strong support for President Trump's controversial executive actions to scale back Obamacare, ban visitors from seven predominantly Muslim countries and build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"Vote him out," hundreds of demonstrators chanted outside the Tower Theatre in downtown Roseville, the Republican-heavy population center of McClintock's sprawling congressional district, which includes the California side of Lake Tahoe. Inside the theater, more than 200 people gathered for a town-hall event hosted by McClintock.

Attendees, some carrying signs that read "Resist," "Dump Tom McTrump" and "Climate change is real," pressed McClintock to denounce Republican plans to repeal the Affordable Care Act, acknowledge the science supporting the human causes of climate change, and oppose Trump's executive order temporarily restricting refugee admissions to the U.S.

Read the whole story

Nev. senators urge FCC to expand rural broadband

By Gary Martin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

WASHINGTON — Nevada's two U.S. senators have joined a bipartisan effort to expand mobile broadband to rural and underserved areas.

More than two dozen senators from both political parties on Thursday asked the Federal Communications Commission to expand mobile broadband in rural areas to improve public safety and enhance education and economic opportunities in precision agriculture and health care.

U.S. Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., and U.S. Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev., were among those requesting FCC Chairman Ajit Pai to "move forward" with the second phase of a so-called mobility fund to expand communications services.

[Read the whole story](#)

Water at LTUSD sites to be tested for lead

By Kathryn Reed

Schools in Lake Tahoe Unified School District are going to have their water tested for lead per a voluntary initiative

put forth by the state Department of Water Resources.

The water purveyor for a particular district must provide the testing to the schools at no charge. The school districts must ask the water company to do the testing, it's not automatic.

Terry Powers, laboratory manager for South Tahoe Public Utility District, told the board earlier this week that LTUSD has contacted him and will be sending a formal letter seeking the water tests.

"We are required to take five samples at each school. Sites have to be the most highly used stations," Powers said.

While Al Tahoe, Tahoe Valley and South Tahoe Middle schools either use wells or Lukins water, STPUD will be testing at those sites as well.

Most schools are not regularly required to test for lead. In the wake of what happened in Michigan, state officials wanted to ensure water being consumed by schoolchildren was lead free. Districts, though, do not have to test now if they don't want to.

LTUSD did not respond to questions asking why it chose to go forward with the testing.

If an issue is discovered, it will be up to the school district to fix it.

The testing is expected to be done this school year. Results will be public information.

Not enough reservoir space for Calif. water

By Ryan Sabalow, Dale Kasler and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

After five years of drought, could California really have so much rain and snow there's no room to store all the water?

The answer – as the state's water picture careens from bust to boom – is yes.

One month into an exceptionally stormy 2017, river flows through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta have been so powerful that the massive pumps that ship north-state water to Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley have roared at full throttle for weeks. The federal and state pumping stations near Tracy delivered more water in January than in any month in the last 12 years, according to a *Sacramento Bee* review of data supplied by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

[Read the whole story](#)

Northstar master plan changes approved

By Jessie Marchesseau

Housing for workers and traffic were two of the main concerns of Placer County planning commissioners on Feb. 2 as they discussed amendments to Northstar's master plan.

The 20-year Northstar Mountain Master Plan includes the following key points:

- 5 new lifts
- A gondola from the lower parking lots
- 25 new ski trails on approximately 175 acres
- 400 acres of new tree skiing
- Widening of existing ski trails
- Additional snowmaking on 13 existing trails and 12 of the proposed trails
- 3 new lodges/warming huts
- Relocating the cross country center
- Expanding the existing Summit Deck and Grille
- A long-term forest fuels reduction and timber harvest plan
- A habitat management plan including resource protection, seasonal wildlife closures, forest management, invasive weed management and more.

A lengthy presentation explained the above plans and Northstar's desire to make a better experience for resort visitors through expanding terrain and services. There was no mention of the Forest Flyer roller coaster discussed in the past, nor any mention of other summertime services.

Allen Breuch, supervising planner with Placer County, introduced the agenda item and the Northstar representatives in attendance. Breuch gave a recap of the plan, reminding the commission that it came before the planning commission in 2012 and the final EIR has been completed.

Only a very small portion of the improvements would be located within the Tahoe basin, and those would be subject to Tahoe Regional Planning Agency approval.

Northstar representatives noted there will be significant unavoidable impacts. Adding new trails and lifts will have a visual impact from Highway 267. There would also be air quality impacts during construction.

Northstar estimates the expansion will require hiring about 110 new full-time employees who would then need a place to live. Northstar intends to create employee housing to accommodate 75 percent of those employees, though there are no specifics yet on how they would accomplish it.

Commissioners noted that housing is a hot issue right now, in short supply and high demand. They stressed how important it would be for Northstar to carry through on that part of the plan.

The commissioners also expressed concern about parking and traffic issues. On recent weekends, cars trying to enter Northstar have been backed up all the way to Interstate 80. Commissioner Larry Severson said he was worried this might give a bad name not only to Northstar, but to the Tahoe ski industry as a whole.

The congestion doesn't hold up just skiers, but locals trying to travel from Truckee to Kings Beach as well, he said.

Northstar representatives skirted the issue without giving any real answer or solution. The master plan was designed to reduce crowding on the ski hill by adding new runs, but does nothing to address the parking problem. The resort will be adding only 20 parking spaces, and those will be at the new cross country ski center location.

Northstar General Manager Nadia Guerriero explained the master plan will "improve guest and employee experiences ... with on-

mountain, recreational and skier improvements.” She added that it does not include real estate or parking expansion.

With the master plan and EIR already submitted, Northstar was before the commission with a handful of specific items.

The requests brought before the commission were:

- An amendment to relocate an existing tourist/resort commercial land use area.
- Rezone two existing forestry zone areas so one would align with the relocated Martis Valley Community Plan land use designation square, and the other adjusted to a “more suitable location” for development of campsites.
- A zoning text amendment to Placer County Code amending the definition of “ski lift facilities” and “ski runs” and Timberland Production Zone to allow for the development of ski lift facilities and ski runs as a conditionally permitted use within land boundaries owned and/or operated by existing ski resorts within TPZ land located outside the Tahoe basin.
- Approval of a conditional use permit to allow the Northstar Mountain Master Plan which would guide development of the resort over a projected 20-year period.

When the floor opened to public comment, eight people stepped up to offer their opinion. Of those, two expressed concerns about the plan, one about the parking and traffic issue, the other about the soundness of the EIR. The other six commenters were in full support of the plan and the requested changes.

Breuch assured commissioners the EIR was done correctly.

Commissioners approved all requests unanimously.

The commission also approved the extension of a special use permit for the timeshare project at 215 Anderson Road and 6731 North Lake Blvd. in Tahoe Vista. According to representatives

on behalf of PFK Development Group, financing issues delayed the project, but the company is ready to move forward with demolishing the existing buildings this summer. Two community members spoke up from the Tahoe City office with complaints about the current condition of the property including trash, severe dilapidation and wild animals. The commission voted to grant the extension with a condition that demolition of existing structures will begin during the 2017 building season.

The Feb. 2 Placer County Planning Commission meeting was in Auburn, though both items on the consent agenda concerned properties located in the Tahoe-Truckee area. Tahoe residents wishing to give input without traveling to Auburn were invited to attend the meeting via interactive video at the Placer County Administrative Offices in Tahoe City.

North Tahoe, Truckee luxury home sales soared in 2016

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Luxury home sales in the North Lake Tahoe and Truckee area, which dropped off the table during the recession, shot up 50 percent in 2016, according to the regional office of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage.

Coldwell said 280 single-family homes and condominiums priced at \$1 million and higher sold last year in the North Lake Tahoe/Truckee market, up from 187 unit sales in 2015. The data was compiled by the Multiple Listing Service.

[Read the whole story](#)

Report: BLM agent broke rules at Burning Man

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

A Bureau of Land Management supervisory agent from Utah violated federal ethics rules after he used his position to get his family and girlfriend into Burning Man and influenced the hiring process for a friend, according to a report released Monday.

The Department of Interior's Office of the Inspector General for a year and a half investigated three complaints about the agent.

The agent is not named in the report but is described as "the person behind many of the BLM requests" at Burning Man that were canceled in 2015, the report said.

[Read the whole story](#)