

Bill allows for skill in slot machines

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Gov. Brian Sandoval's office today announced that he signed legislation paving the way for the state gaming industry to introduce skill into slot machines.

Senate Bill 9, first reported by the Sun in February, directs Nevada gaming regulators to adopt rules promoting "innovative, alternative and advanced technology" in casino equipment. And it provides a pathway for a new skill element in slot machines, essentially allowing them to play more like video games.

The idea is that the bill will enable casinos to appeal better to younger customers who are increasingly hesitant to embrace simple, chance-heavy traditional slot machines. The move has been supported by gaming regulators, representatives of casinos and equipment manufacturers and, now, the entire state government.

[Read the whole story](#)

Bear caught, tagged near Stateline to be released

By Channele Bessette, Reno Gazette-Journal

After capturing a black bear near Stateline the Nevada Department of Wildlife brought the bear to their Reno offices

on Friday. After tranquilizing the bear, NDOW employees processed the bear for ear tags and an inner lip tattoo for future tracking purposes.

The male bear is estimated to be four or five years old and weighs between 400 and 450 pounds. His size is approximately 100 pounds heavier than a typical male black bear of his age. The bear was deemed a potential “conflict bear” after it had wandered into an urban area, meaning that it was a potential threat to humans.

With the warm weather, bears are starting to wake up from hibernation, and many are wandering too close to human populations.

Read the whole story

Nev. lawmakers approve bill authorizing Uber, Lyft

By Sean Whaley and Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY — A bill authorizing ride-hailing companies like Uber and Lyft to operate in Nevada won approval early Saturday in the Nevada Legislature, but it didn’t happen without plenty of confusion.

A 3 percent excises tax on fares, including on taxis and limousines, was also approved, which will raise tens of millions in new revenue, including \$19 million to fully fund the new medical school at UNLV.

In Assembly and Senate floor sessions that lasted until the early morning hours on Saturday, the Assembly signed off on

Assembly Bill 175, sending it to Gov. Brian Sandoval, who is expected to sign the measure.

Read the whole story

Big strike against Olympic Valley incorporation

By Kathryn Reed

The ability to make Olympic Valley the next incorporated city in California was dealt a set back this week.

The draft of the comprehensive fiscal analysis (CFA) says, "... the town's potential general fund and road fund expenditures materially exceed revenues in each year of our forecast and incorporation does not appear to be feasible at this time."

Placer County's Local Area Formation Commission is tasked with determining if it is fiscally prudent for an area to become incorporated. Without a yes from LAFCo, it's near impossible to proceed.

"These are proposed numbers, but I don't agree with them," Fred Ilfed with Incorporate Olympic Valley told *Lake Tahoe News*. He doesn't believe LAFCo should have released any findings until the revenue neutrality negotiations are finished. Those talks aren't supposed to start until June.

The whole issue of incorporation started a few years ago when Squaw Valley ski resort proposed developing the 26-acre base resort for more lodging and other amenities that were designed to make the area more of a year-round destination.

Many residents in this small enclave are resistant to the proposed changes. They like the quiet, rural setting. Now they want more of a say over what happens to their piece of the Sierra. Today their representation is the Placer County Board of Supervisors that occasionally meets in the greater Lake Tahoe area. Many feel disenfranchised with that board being based in Auburn and not tied to the greater Lake Tahoe area. This led the group to start the process of incorporating as a city.

One of the criteria to accomplish this is to demonstrate that doing so would not adversely financially affect the county. According to the draft CFA, that is not going to happen in this case.

“The independent study confirms the prevailing wisdom, that creating a town of 500 people, based on one revenue source and dependent on tourism and weather conditions, doesn’t make sense. There aren’t enough pencils and erasers in the world to make the numbers work,” Andy Wirth, president and CEO of Squaw Valley Ski Holdings, said in a statement. “Furthermore, any attempts by Incorporate Olympic Valley to grab and capture transient occupancy tax from other parts of the North Lake Tahoe area, amounts to a taking that will only have negative and adverse effects for everyone who lives here, works here or visits here.”

It is Wirth and his bosses who want to do the developing.

Pro incorporation advocates don’t believe the draft report is the final nail in their coffin. There is a public hearing next month to further gather information, plus the fiscal analysis is not completely done.

Handful weigh in on Echo Summit bridge plans

By Jessie Marchesseau

MEYERS – Seven miles west of South Lake Tahoe on Highway 50, the Echo Summit bridge is cracking, rusting and flaking apart. Caltrans has been working on a replacement/rehabilitation plan for the bridge since 2012.

A community open house at the California Conservation Corps office in Meyers on Thursday was designed to present the current project alternatives and take public comment.

Dozens of chairs sat empty during the presentation as only about a half dozen people were in attendance, including El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel. Novasel said it was decided after Caltrans did a similar presentation on the project in South Lake Tahoe back in February that one should be conducted in Meyers since the community will be directly affected by any work on the highway. (The media was sent a press release about the May 21 event one day earlier.)



Caltrans plans to replace this Echo Summit bridge in 2019.
Photo/Provided

Project manager Clark Peri discussed the need for the project, showing photographs of the deteriorating bridge with its rusting steel supports and spalling concrete. Built in 1939, the bridge is in what engineers consider advanced stages of deterioration, though is not in danger of actually collapsing anytime soon.

Caltrans has come up with six alternatives for the bridge project. The alternatives vary in scope, duration and type of road closure:

Alternative 1A

- Replace with 26-foot wide bridge
- Total 120-150 days in one construction season
- 60-90 days under full closure and 10-30 days under one-way traffic control

Alternative 1B

- Replace with 26-foot wide bridge
- Total 100-130 days in two construction seasons
- 20-50 days under full closure and 50-70 days under one-way traffic control

Alternative 2A

- Replace with 30.75-foot wide bridge
- Total 200-230 days in two construction seasons
- Under one-way traffic control (8-hour work shifts)

Alternative 2B

- Replace with 30.75 foot wide bridge
- Total 160-190 days in two construction seasons
- Under one-way traffic control (10-hour work shifts)

Alternative 3

- Rehabilitate existing bridge
- Total 150-180 days in two construction seasons

- 20-50 days under full closure and 90-120 days under one-way traffic control

Alternative 4

- Do nothing.

If the road were closed completely, vehicles would be detoured to highways 88 and 89 during that time. This is what happened when the highway was fully closed during the wall project in 2011, but it was only for a couple of weeks.

Novasel recalled the mudslide on Highway 50 in the 1990s when the road was closed for so long that businesses in Meyers were going out of business.

"We've seen how devastating it can be when it's closed," she said.

This is why she wants to start the conversation about this project early, get plenty of public input and plan well in advance. Right now the project is still in the environmental document and project report phase. Construction is not slated to begin until 2019.

During the comment portion of the meeting, attendees expressed a number of concerns. One resident who commutes to Sacramento for work was told commuter passes during road closures may be possible, though not guaranteed. When NDOT had Kingsbury Grade closed summer passes were issued on a limited basis.

Peri assured one attendee that his suggestion to build an alternate road through Echo Pass instead of detouring cars to Highway 88 would be discussed.

Another community member expressed his concerns about the area surrounding the highway not being geologically sound; he requested it be thoroughly studied before millions of dollars are invested into a bridge that would be completely demolished in the event of an earthquake. Again, Peri assured those in

attendance there would be a thorough geological study completed, fault lines looked at and the findings taken into account before any project designs are decided upon. This is standard for all such projects, he said.

Caltrans expects to have the environmental studies completed by this fall and anticipates another public meeting at that time. The highway officials hope to have a draft of the environmental impact report ready for public feedback by January of next year.

"The team takes all the comments they've collected along the way, along with their own studies, into consideration before they make the final decision," Steve Nelson, public information officer for Caltrans, said.

To submit a comment on the project, email Suzanne Melim at Suzanne.melim@dot.ca.gov.

Study: Cell phone bans improve student test scores

By Amanda Schupak, CBS News

Reactions to bans prohibiting kids from having cell phones in schools have had mixed reactions, with proponents arguing they cut down on distraction and cheating, and parents countering that it's unsafe to cut off communication between them and their children. Now, a new study shows that there's academic merit to the bans.

Researchers from the University of Texas at Austin and Louisiana State University measured student performance in 91

schools in four cities in England before and after cellphone bans were instituted. Their findings showed that average test scores improved post-ban, with students scoring 6.41 percentage points of a standard deviation higher, which made them 2 percent more likely to pass their end of the year exams.

The effect was twice as great for low-achieving and special-needs students.

Read the whole story

Memorial Day trips signal busy vacation season

By Anna-Louise Jackson, BloombergBusiness

Memorial Day could kick off a busy summer for travel, as low gasoline prices and an improving job market are fueling vacation-planning.

About 37.2 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more from home during this holiday weekend, the most in 10 years, according to AAA. This 4.7 percent projected increase from 2014 includes trips by car, air, cruise, train and bus in the May 21-25 period.

Memorial Day provides “a good indication of what’s ahead” because the holiday marks the unofficial start of the peak vacation season, said Julie Hall, a spokeswoman for the largest U.S. motoring association. This “very positive forecast” should continue throughout the rest of the summer, she said.

Such optimism is echoed by hotel chain La Quinta Holdings Inc., which sees “very strong demand” for lodging during the Memorial Day weekend, CEO Wayne Goldberg said on an April 29 conference call. If so, that would defy recent measures of consumer confidence that suggest Americans are growing more pessimistic about the economy. The University of Michigan preliminary index of sentiment dropped in May by the most in two years. At the same time, households still held relatively upbeat views on incomes.

Read the whole story

Fatal crash near Kyburz

A Bay Area man died Thursday in a head-on collision on Highway 50 near Kyburz.

David Calderon, 78, of Milpitas was pronounced dead at the scene.

Calderon was headed east May 21 at about 2:25pm when a vehicle driven by Gary Fitzgerald crossed the double-yellow line into oncoming traffic, according to California Highway Patrol officers. Fitzgerald, 73, of Grass Valley sustained serious injuries.

The accident is under investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Truckee ready for fire season with new truck

Truckee Fire Department's ARFF fire engine went into service a few weeks ago and will be based at station 96 at the airport.

The Timberwolf was built by Rosenbauer on a 2014 International four-wheel drive chassis. The Truckee Tahoe Airport District purchased the engine and the fire district paid for outfitting it.

Although the engine has some specific aircraft capabilities and tools, like a large foam tank, it is a multipurpose engine that is equipped to fight structure, aircraft and wildland fires. This engine will be a first out engine responding to fire calls throughout the Truckee area.

The engine can carry four firefighters, 750 gallons of water and 50 gallons of foam concentrate.

Gaming on legislative radar, even if not the focus

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada's casino industry hasn't been the main focus this year in the Legislature, but it is an important part of the action in Carson City.

Casino executives have been a key voice in this session's main debate: whether and how to boost education funding, specifically through Gov. Brian Sandoval's proposed expansion

of the business license fee, which the Nevada Resort Association supports.

Association President Virginia Valentine said the gaming industry would pay about 58 percent of all business taxes collected by the state if Sandoval's plan is approved, but association members have a vested interest in improving education and think Sandoval's vision is the best way to get there.

Read the whole story