

Safety, connectivity in S. Tahoe may improve

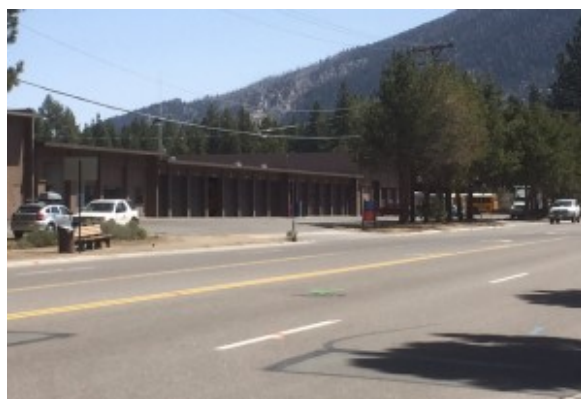
By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe is going after a \$2.1 million grant that would make Al Tahoe Boulevard less nightmarish for those on foot or a bike as well as improve the intersection of Highway 50.

Jim Marino, assistant public works director, called this the second most important intersection in the city after the Y. This is because of everything that is going on in such a small area. South Tahoe Middle School, Lake Tahoe Unified School District offices, Lake Tahoe Community College, ball fields, law enforcement, adult and juvenile detention facilities, community park and a shopping center are all located within blocks of each other. They are connected by a five-lane road and state highway.

With all of the driveways and lack of sidewalks, it is not an ideal place to be unless in a vehicle.

The grant would change that because it would provide the necessary funding to make upgrades.



The LTUSD bus barn will not be relocated, but the center

ingress/egress may be
removed. Photo/LTN

Steve Morales, facilities director with LTUSD, said one of the driveways to the bus barn would be eliminated. The district would also look at how people access the middle school.

A class 1 bike trail would be built from the highway to Johnson Boulevard as well as class 2 along the road.

The California Tahoe Conservancy is also applying for a \$2 million Active Transportation Program grant.

Officials believe because the projects would link together, this is a strategy that should show those who control the purse strings that there is a collaborative approach to the local process. CTC wants the money for the Greenway bike path.

The city is the lead on the other grant, with other partners part of the process. This area was identified last year as a significant gap in the connectivity piece.

How everything will look remains to be seen. The city is in the conceptual design phase now.

Six people spoke at the May 5 City Council meeting in support of the city going after the grant. Another nine letters of support were submitted.

Even without the grant there will be new sidewalks coming. This is the result of Southwest Gas working in the area and coming to an agreement with the city to make the improvements while the utility relocates its lines.

In other action:

- Connolly Beach will be a topic at the May 19 meeting.
- Most of the master fee schedule was approved. Recreation fees will be brought back at the end of the year

and ice arena fees in three months.

- The council approved refinancing bonds.
 - CTC staff gave a presentation about how \$1.5 million is spent each year treating parcels so they are fire safe and hazards are removed.
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Californians' barely cutting water use

By Fenit Nirappil, AP

SACRAMENTO – Californians conserved little water in March and local officials were not aggressive in cracking down on waste, state regulators reported Tuesday as they considered tough measures to force savings amid a continuing drought.

The State Water Resources Control Board received the update as it considers sweeping mandatory emergency regulations to protect water supplies in the parched state.

Brown has argued that the voluntary targets in place since early 2014 were insufficient and that Californians needed a jolt to take conservation seriously.

A survey of local water departments released at the start of the two-day meeting shows water use fell less than 4 percent in March compared with the same month in 2013. Overall savings have been only about 9 percent since last summer, even though Brown set a voluntary 20 percent target.

The water board on Tuesday began considering new regulations to step it up. The rules would bar cities from using drinking-

quality water on street median grass and encourage homeowners to let lawns go brown to meet local mandatory water reduction targets.

Those conservation targets are among the most contentious provisions of the proposed rules. The board plans to order each city to cut water use by as much as 36 percent compared to 2013, the year before the governor declared a drought emergency, and has rejected calls to create easier targets for communities in drier areas or for cities that have been conserving since before the drought.

Some local water departments call the proposal unrealistic and unfair. They say achieving steep cuts could cause declining property values, restrictions on filling pools and washing cars and higher water bills.

An economic analysis of the water board's proposal commissioned by the board estimated that private water utilities and local water departments would lose a total of about \$1 billion in revenue through lost water sales if they meet the board's targets. They will eventually charge higher rates to make up the revenue, the report said.

The board sees lush lawns and verdant landscapes as first on the chopping block to meet conservation targets, but some are fighting their depiction as villains in the drought.

Keith Harbeck, of the California Pool and Spa Association, told the board Tuesday that it is destructive to turn industries into symbols of water waste, including almond growers, water bottlers and golf courses.

"Finger-pointing has been particularly painful because folks pick whatever is symbolic," said Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the board. "It's a collective issue that we must all rise to."

Board officials said they expect to start seeing water savings as soon as June and are willing to add restrictions and

penalties for agencies that lag.

Brown said last week he would push for legislation authorizing fines of up to \$10,000 for extreme water wasters. Another tool, tiered pricing in which the price rises as water use goes up, is in question after a court struck down water rates designed to encourage conservation in San Juan Capistrano in Orange County.

PCT hiker rescued in Alpine County

By Richard Chang and Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

A teenage hiker said Tuesday he was down to his last drops of water as he waited for rescuers on the Pacific Crest Trail in remote Alpine County on Sunday night.

A California Highway Patrol helicopter crew found D'Artagnan Driscoll, 18, of Apache Junction, Ariz., on Monday, roughly nine hours after he sent a rescue signal from a hand-held GPS device.

"I had about 8 ounces of water left when the California Highway Patrol found me," Driscoll said, as he traveled Highway 395 on the way back to Arizona. "If I wasn't dehydrated then, I would have been very soon."

Read the whole story

3 SLT businesses accused of selling booze to kids

A minor was successful at buying alcohol at three out of four stores in South Lake Tahoe.

South Lake Tahoe police officers on May 2 cited the three clerks, whose names have not been released.

They were:

- BevMo, 24-year-old female.
- Safeway, 21-year-old female.
- CVS Pharmacy (Bijou), 35-year-old female.

Those who allegedly sold to the minor face a minimum fine of \$250, and/or 24 to 32 hours of community service for a first violation. In addition, ABC will take administrative action against the alcoholic beverage license of the business.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Homewood project delayed at least one year

Homewood Mountain Resort's legal troubles are not over, which means renovating and essentially re-creating the West Shore

ski resort won't happen this summer.

The Third District Court of Appeal still must rule on a case involving JMA Ventures, owners of the resort, and California Clean Energy Committee. A decision could come this summer, but by that time it will be too late have all the financing and bid documents put together. Plus, it's only possible to move dirt in the Lake Tahoe Basin between May 1 and Oct. 15.

The nonprofit that filed the suit lost in Placer County Superior Court in 2012. The group is challenging the project based on the environmental document, saying traffic will be a problem and energy use will rise.

JMA, at least when the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency approved the project in 2011, expected to spend about \$500 million to build a boutique hotel, condos, townhomes, grocery store, restaurant, retail spa and pool. The latter being on-mountain and open to the public.

Upgrades to existing chairlifts are part of the plans, too.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Tahoe Keys Marina preps channel for dredging



Metal poles outlining the channel leading to the Tahoe Keys Marina were put in May 5. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

After months of bickering, the channel leading to the Tahoe Keys Marina is about to be dredged.

Poles are in outlining where the dredging will take place. The boat that was to put in the silt screen had a hole in it, so that was delayed a day until Wednesday.

The marina received a permit earlier this year from Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board to dredge. The hold up has been the fighting between marina owners, Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association and the Tahoe Keys Beach and Harbor Association.

An agreement from 1991 is the root of the troubles – that and distrust between the parties. The document says the marina is to pay for one-half of the dredging and the other two groups

are to equally split the other half. The marina wanted the money up front, the other groups wanted to pay upon completion.

Bid documents to do the work were not provided, so the associations did not want to blindly put up money. Plus, they didn't want to pay for something in advance in case it didn't really happen. The marina did not want to finance the project.

The original cost was estimated to be \$2.2 million, but those close to the project said that price has been reduced by about one-third.

Work will not be done by Memorial Day, which is often the start of the boating season at Lake Tahoe. There are about 600 docks on this side. While the dredging occurs there will be no boat access in or out of the marina. Boaters could launch elsewhere and tie up at a friend's dock on the homeowners' side.

No one from the marina returned multiple calls.

"The parties are actively pursuing resolution and it appears the dredging project will be completed as everyone wants," Bob Henderson, legal counsel for the marina, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The Beach and Harbor Association has a recording saying they are trying to get things worked out, but apparently are unaware the prep work for dredging started May 5.

Kirk Wooldridge, general manager of TKPOA, said there had been a "stalemate over all aspects of the project." He did not know the marina was starting to work on its channel.

The TKPOA channel is currently being dredged, with all work expected to be done May 21. It will be open to two-way boat traffic May 22 – the Friday of Memorial Day weekend, Wooldridge said.

Wooldridge explained that the sand that was dug up was placed

on the beach per state agency requirements. He told *Lake Tahoe News* the discoloration was temporary and that the dredged material is already starting to blend in with the rest of the beach.

Without the marina returning calls, it is not known where its dredged material will go. In the past it has been sucked out and put into a holding area near the Beach and Harbor Association's parking lot on Venice Drive.

It also isn't known how long this channel will be off limits. Original estimates were two months, but now boaters tell *Lake Tahoe News* it should open in June if there are no obstacles.

Another bone of contention between the marina and TKPOA is that homeowners are supposed to be able to launch for free if the boat is registered to the person whose name is on the property deed. Now the marina is saying it will cost \$90 for homeowners to launch.

Test run signals start of nuclear waste shipments to Nev.

By Steve Tetreault, Las Vegas Review-Journal

WASHINGTON — After 18 months of delay to address the worries of state officials, the Department of Energy said Monday night it will ship potent uranium waste from a federal laboratory in Tennessee for disposal in Nevada.

Officials did not give a time-line for when the shipments will begin from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory to the Area 5

landfill at the Nevada National Security Site, 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

It's unlikely the Department of Energy office that transports nuclear weapons and special nuclear material will make the shipping schedule public.

Read the whole story

Audit: Nev. Medicaid overpayments exceed \$1 mil.

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – An audit of the state Medicaid program released Monday identified more than \$1 million in overpayments and improper billings.

Legislative Counsel auditors identified \$780,000 in overpayments for behavioral health claims, and \$285,000 in overpayments and improper billings for dental claims. The audit of the Division of Health Care Financing and Policy, which administers the Medicaid program, was reviewed by the Legislative Commission's Audit Subcommittee.

Examples of overbilling included a dentist who submitted 4,177 claims, or 48 percent of all claims statewide, for "emergency treatment of dental pain – minor procedure" in fiscal years 2012 and 2013.

Read the whole story

Nevada warned about threat of wildfires



Kit Bailey is the fire guru for U.S. Forest Service in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Photo/LTN file

By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette-Journal

The ongoing drought, warmer-than-usual weather conditions and the fuel for fire those conditions produce could lead to a “perfect storm” this summer where multiple states in the West could be having large, simultaneous fires, state and federal fire officials told Gov. Brian Sandoval Monday.

“The system is going to be heavily taxed this year,” said Kit Bailey of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. “We have preparedness levels of one through five and I’m a little concerned that we may get to an unprecedented level, a level six, and that is kind of a worst-case scenario.

“We have been preparing for and have had dialogue on what is going to look like when Southern California, Northern California, Nevada, Oregon and Washington all have

simultaneous large fire events,” Bailey said.

Despite the seriousness of the situation, Sandoval left the 2015 Governor’s Wildlife Fire Briefing knowing that the various state and federal agencies are prepared for the worst.

Read the whole story

Will Sandoval run for Senate?

By Kyle Roerink, Las Vegas Sun

As a handsome, popular, moderate politician of Latino heritage, Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval often is the subject of political speculation.

Even before his overwhelming re-election win, people were guessing about his ambitions to run for U.S. Senate.

Then Sen. Harry Reid announced his retirement, making a potential Senate run even more attractive to Sandoval.

For now, only Sandoval knows what his next move will be. He refuses to answer questions about his political aspirations, and his inner circle insists he is focused on the job Nevadans elected him to do.

But with Sandoval’s history of exiting office early to win a more powerful seat, pundits speculate he could make a 2016 power play for Reid’s seat.

Read the whole story