Caltrans: Climate change is ‘going to affect freeways’

By Ezra David Romero, Capital Public Radio

Caltrans is taking climate change seriously. So seriously that the organization is prepping a dozen reports that evaluate how things like warming temperatures, changes in rainfall and wildfires affect roadways.

“Climate change poses an immediate and growing threat to California, and Caltrans is being proactive in determining what this means for the state’s transportation system,” said Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty in a press release.

Last year’s storm season caused more than $1.2 billion in highway damages statewide. Think severe flooding, landslides, and coastal erosion.

Read the whole story

Skier dies after falling into tree well at Heavenly

A Santa Rosa man died skiing at Heavenly Mountain Resort on Wednesday.

The name of the 49-year-old has not been released.

He was on the Poma Trail when he lost control on Dec. 27. Resort officials would not say if the man was wearing a helmet, but first responders said he wasn’t.

According to Lake Valley Fire Protection District Fire Chief Tim Alameda, paramedics tried to revive the man, but were unable to do so.

“We had to use a low angle rope rescue to get to him. He was down in a tree well and did not have a helmet. They had to extricate him by using ropes to get to him,” Alameda told *Lake Tahoe News*. “You don’t know if it would have made difference, but it would have put odds in his favor (if he were wearing a helmet). People need to make the investment and wear a helmet whether it’s up there or in the backcountry.

Alameda told *Lake Tahoe News* that at the same time another skier who was going to render aid to the man ended up injuring her foot, which required her to be transported to Barton Memorial Hospital.

“It’s been a busy week for us,” Alameda said. The district has extra staffing to handle the added people in town.

A guy at Kirkwood Mountain Resort hurt his chest Friday in a serious accident, according to Alameda.

Without fresh snow, injuries are more common at ski resorts because of the hardpack conditions and the obstacles.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Parking problems plague Stateline area



Congestion getting into and out of the Heavenly Village parking garage on Dec. 28. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Parking is a growing problem on the South Shore.

Those in the tourism industry want more people here. Those in the regulatory business want people out of their individual cars so they limit the number of parking spots that can built. Private businesses only want people parking there who are frequenting their business.

The problem is exacerbated during peak holiday periods like the Christmas-New Year's weeks.

Anyone who has been in the Stateline area in the last week is likely to have a story about congestion and parking.

Here is one of those stories:

"With company in town for Christmas we went down to Basecamp Pizza; it was the Saturday before Christmas in the early afternoon. I discovered the parking garage is way too small in many areas," one South Lake Tahoe resident told Lake Tahoe

News. *“We had to wait on the street to get into the garage. There was a handwritten sign taped over the rates sign that said due to holiday rates would be double. So instead of $7.50/hour fee, it would be $15/hour. Once inside the garage it was near impossible to negotiate around due to so many vehicles inside. If a car is coming toward you, there isn’t enough room for both cars. One car has to wait. After about 15 minutes trying to go up to find a parking spot my husband told me to get out and go save us a table. He continued up into the garage to find a spot. Turns out the garage was full. It would seem the garage should have an attendant or two, especially on holidays, and their system should know when the space limits have been met to not allow additional vehicles in. Ultimately, he made it out of the maze and went over to Harrah’s and parked easily, which is what he wanted to do in the first place. I won’t be using the garage in the future. It’s unfortunate when it was built someone didn’t think through the amount of people congested into the Heavenly Village area with the gondola, restaurants, entertainment, etc.”*

Several years ago the South Lake Tahoe City Council set a rate schedule for the parking garage at Heavenly Village that increases the fee during holiday times. This year rates are doubled from Dec. 22-Jan. 1. The July 4 week is another time rates spike.

Even the $5 after 5pm rate is now $10.

“By having higher prices we hope people carpool in and there are less vehicles in the area,” Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Uhler admits the design of the garage is flawed in that it does not accommodate large SUVs well, and the exit lane on the left makes it near impossible for cars to keep going up the structure.

“That’s partly why we staff it during holidays. If it stacks

up and causes difficulties, we a have person there who can get people through more quickly," Uhler said.

With Heavenly Village now being a destination for locals and visitors, the parking garage is being used more. This is a good thing for the city, which has about seven more years until the debt on the garage is paid off. Once those bonds are paid, it will mean more money for the city's General Fund.

Adding to the chaos is **Harrah's Lake Tahoe** no longer lets skiers park in its lot. This change took effect earlier this month. This was to provide more parking for casino patrons.

"What I can tell you is that our guests have access to free parking at our Cal base lodge, Stage Coach, and Boulder base facilities. We additionally offer a free offsite parking option for our guests at the Hard Rock Lake Tahoe," Kevin Cooper with Heavenly Mountain Resort told *Lake Tahoe News.* "Once our guests have parked at their hotel or rental property, they have access to five free shuttle routes accessing all four of our base areas."

Driving around the area in the late afternoon on Dec. 28 it was a mess. Delivery trucks on Bellamy Court added to the congestion. Vehicles were parked on Montreal Avenue despite the no parking signs. People seemed to be going in circles in search of spot.

The city has parking meters on Bellamy and Transit Way. The old Crescent V Center is just for their customers. With Van Sickle Bi-State Park parking off-limits this time of year, people wanting to play there are also searching for parking.

Parking – paid or free – is definitely in short supply, and public transit is not a viable option here. For now, it means patience or stay away from the Stateline area.

North Shore casinos rake in money in Nov.

November was a good month for North Lake Tahoe casinos, a lackluster month for South Shore venues and so-so for the whole state of Nevada.

North Shore revenue was up 18.9 percent compared to 2016 to $1,859,371, Stateline was down 2.92 percent to $15,510,510, and statewide it was down 2.3 percent to $909,007,025.

Tourism should change the numbers for December.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Wildland fire in Pine Nuts at 50 acres

A fire that started Thursday night in the Pine Nut Mountains has burned about 50 acres.

Called the Holiday Fire, it is burning south of Gardnerville between Carter and Buffalo Spring. Crews had a hard time reaching the fire because of the remote location.

It was reported just after 7pm Dec. 28 on acreage owned by the

Bureau of Land Management.

The cause of the fire is not known.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Big labor sees growth potential in Calif. pot workers

By Scott Smith, AP

Unions have caught a whiff of a rare opportunity to organize a whole new set of workers as recreational marijuana becomes legal in California.

The United Farm Workers, Teamsters and United Food and Commercial Workers are looking to unionize the tens of thousands of potential workers involved in the legal weed game, from planters to rollers to sellers. The move could provide a boost to organized labor's lagging membership – if infighting doesn't get in the way.

The United Farm Workers, co-founded by iconic labor leader Cesar Chavez, says organizing an industry rooted in agriculture is a natural fit, and growers could label their products with the union's logo as a marketing strategy.

Read the whole story

South Shore Y comes alive

By Adam Jensen

Improvements made in the two years since the passage of the Tahoe Valley Area Plan are as diverse as they are abundant.

The redevelopment of several parcels, storm water treatment, transportation upgrades, and plans for additional open space are all taking shape following the passage of the area plan, a key step in implementing the 2012 Regional Plan. The plan, approved in 2015 by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board, covers 337 acres near the intersection of highway 50 and 89, known as the Y, in South Lake Tahoe.

The vision for the area creates commercial, mixed-use, and multi-family development that is pedestrian friendly, transit oriented, and harmonious with the natural environment.

Since the plan's adoption, proponents have submitted 22 applications for projects located within the area plan boundary. Ten of the projects are complete, 11 have been issued permits and/or are under construction, and one is under review.

"We're seeing a lot of environmental redevelopment on the land within the Tahoe Valley Area Plan," said Brandy McMahon, local government coordination program manager for TRPA. "The environmental and community improvements happening around the 'Y' will provide long-term benefits to the lake, residents, and visitors."

Barton Memorial Hospital broke ground on its facilities master plan, which includes the Robert Maloff Center of Excellence. The facility, a 25,000-square-foot orthopedic, sports performance, rehabilitation, and wellness center, is under construction. The project includes the retirement from future development of more than 33,600 square feet of land coverage

previously removed from a stream environment zone (SEZ) at Lake Tahoe Airport. The city also approved two mixed-use projects near Barton Memorial Hospital.

The facelift and full remodel of the Factory Stores at the Y transformed a dated shopping mall into The Crossing at Tahoe Valley. A former hardware store was turned into the South Lake Brewing Company. The tear down and rebuild of the McDonald's near the Y is complete and the city has approved Blue Granite Climbing Gym nearby on Emerald Bay Road, which is scheduled to open in the spring.

"The city is excited to see major improvements to the built environment in the Tahoe Valley area since the adoption of the Tahoe Valley Area Plan," said John Hitchcock, planning manager for South Lake Tahoe. "All these projects directly benefit the community and visitors with increased options for dining, retail, and recreation opportunities. They also directly benefit the environment with the implementation of water quality best management practices."

The Tahoe Valley Greenbelt, a project that includes SEZ restoration, storm water improvements, and installation of pedestrian-bicycle pathways and amenities, is also being designed and engineered.

In addition to these projects, Caltrans began work on the Highway 50 to Trout Creek project in spring of 2017. Another lake-saving project within the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program, it is expected to continue from Winnemucca Avenue to Sierra Boulevard in 2018 and Sierra Boulevard to Trout Creek Bridge in 2019. Benefits of the project include collecting storm water runoff to protect and improve Lake Tahoe's clarity, as well as roadway improvements like curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and 6-foot shoulders for bike lanes.

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Charter wants crackdown on password sharing

By Gerry Smith, Bloomberg

On Twitter, they are openly bartered, donated, even celebrated.

“Anyone have a Spectrum user ID & password I can trade for?” one Twitter user wrote last month. Another thanked her friend “for giving me his Spectrum username and password to watch the World Series Game 7.” A third tweeted: “Totally figured out my parents Spectrum password and can watch cable now through my Apple TV. I literally love my life.”

Tom Rutledge has had enough. The chief executive officer of Charter Communications Inc., which sells cable TV under the Spectrum name, is leading an industrywide effort to crack down on password sharing. It’s a growing problem that could cost pay-TV companies millions of subscribers—and billions of dollars in revenue—when they can least afford it.

Read the whole story

Legal pot in Calif. brings host of environmental rules

By Ellen Knickmeyer, AP

At a state briefing on environmental rules that await growers entering California's soon-to-be-legal marijuana trade, organic farmers Ulysses Anthony, Tracy Sullivan and Adam Mernit listened intently, eager to make their humble cannabis plot a model of sustainable agriculture in a notoriously destructive industry dominated by the black market.

In line with a 2017 study that found marijuana grows are more damaging, plot for plot, than commercial logging in Northern California forests, Anthony said he has seen too many destructive grows. Trash-strewn clearings. Growers heaping fertilizer at the foot of a centuries-old sequoia tree, needlessly endangering it. Wild streams diverted for irrigation.

"It really bothers me when I see some of the other operations, the treatment of the land," he said.

Read the whole story

VHR scam warning issued by Truckee

The increased demand for rental properties is often associated with an increase in criminals taking advantage of unsuspecting victims.

Truckee police officers are warning people that vacation rental scams are a common occurrence.

It usually begins by a suspect searching the internet for legitimate houses for rent or sale. The scammer then uses the photos of the home in the listing as well as the description to create a fake advertisement displaying the house as available to rent. These false ads are most commonly found on Craigslist, officers said.

The victim contacts the alleged owner, reserves vacation rental dates, and deposits money directly into the suspect's account. Upon arrival, the true homeowner is often very surprised, and the victim comes to the realization that they have been scammed.

In these types of scams, the victim typically loses between $1,000 and $2,000.

Scammers often use voice over IP (VoIP) phones or proxy servers for email correspondence from public places (often in foreign countries), making tracing the phone number or IP addresses and identifying the suspect nearly impossible. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is aware of, and is currently investigating these kinds of cases.

Truckee officers recommend people use reputable sources with verified business addresses, phone contacts, and employees. If paying for a deposit, use a credit card that has fraud protection. If the deal seems odd or unusual, find another property.

Home owners should check the internet to see if their property is fraudulently listed for rent.